TONY EARNSHAW
TOBE HOOPER'S SALEM'S LOT
STUDIES IN THE HORROR FILM

Few horror films in the history of television can boast the deadly seriousness, inspired casting, indelible images and lingering impact of *Salem's Let*. Tobe Hooper's adaptation of Stephen King's 1975 novel about vampires that infest a small Maine town was first broadcast in November 1979. The three-hour film featured unforgettable performances by an array of stars — James Mason, David Soul, Lew Ayres, Bonnie Bedelia — along with one of the most truly terrifying monsters in the history of movies: the feral vampire Mr Barlow played by Reggie Nalder. This book documents the gestation and production of the film. There are reminiscences from cast and crew, including new and exclusive interviews with Tobe Hooper, David Soul, cinematographer Jules Brenner and producer Richard Kobritz; hundreds of images, including many never before published behind-the-scenes production stills; deleted scenes from the original teleplay; foreign posters and artwork inspired by the film; photographs of Ferndale, California, where the exteriors of *Salem's Lot* were filmed; and much, much more.

Tony Earnshaw is your guide to the quiet little town of Salem's Lot. Just be sure to leave before nightfall...



Centipede Press www.centipedepress.com

TOBE HOOPER'S SALEM'S LOT EDITED BY TONY EARNSHAW

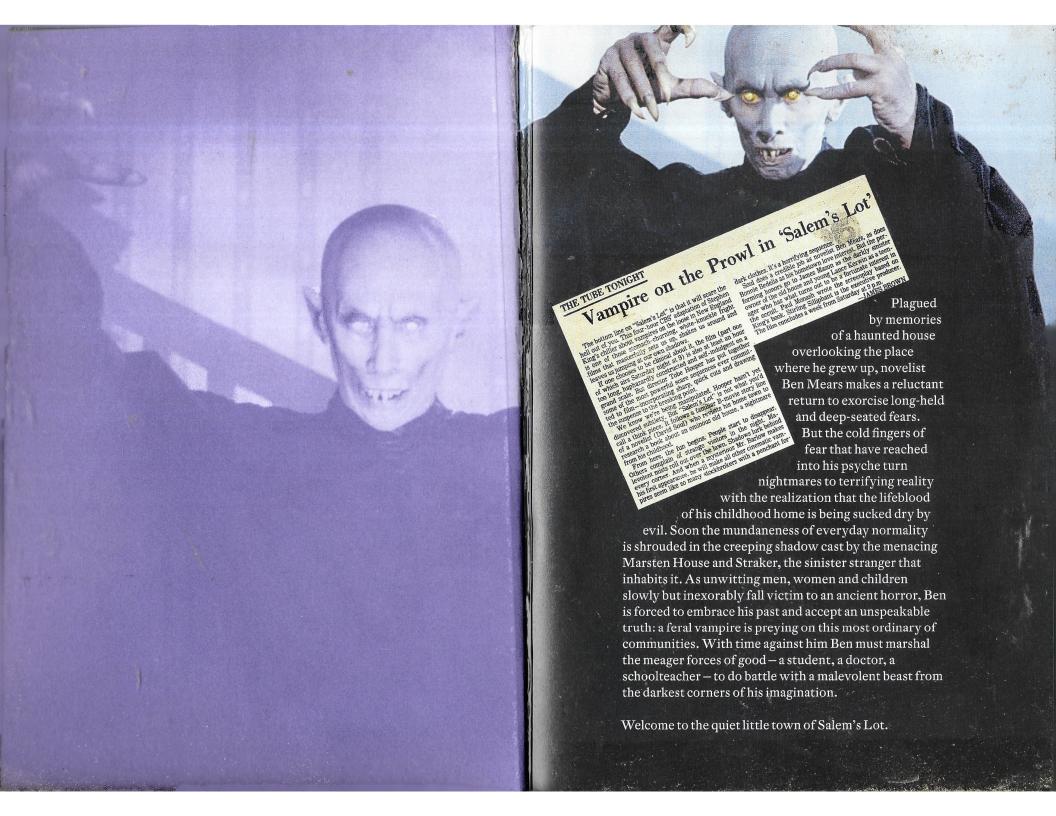
CENTIPEDE PRESS



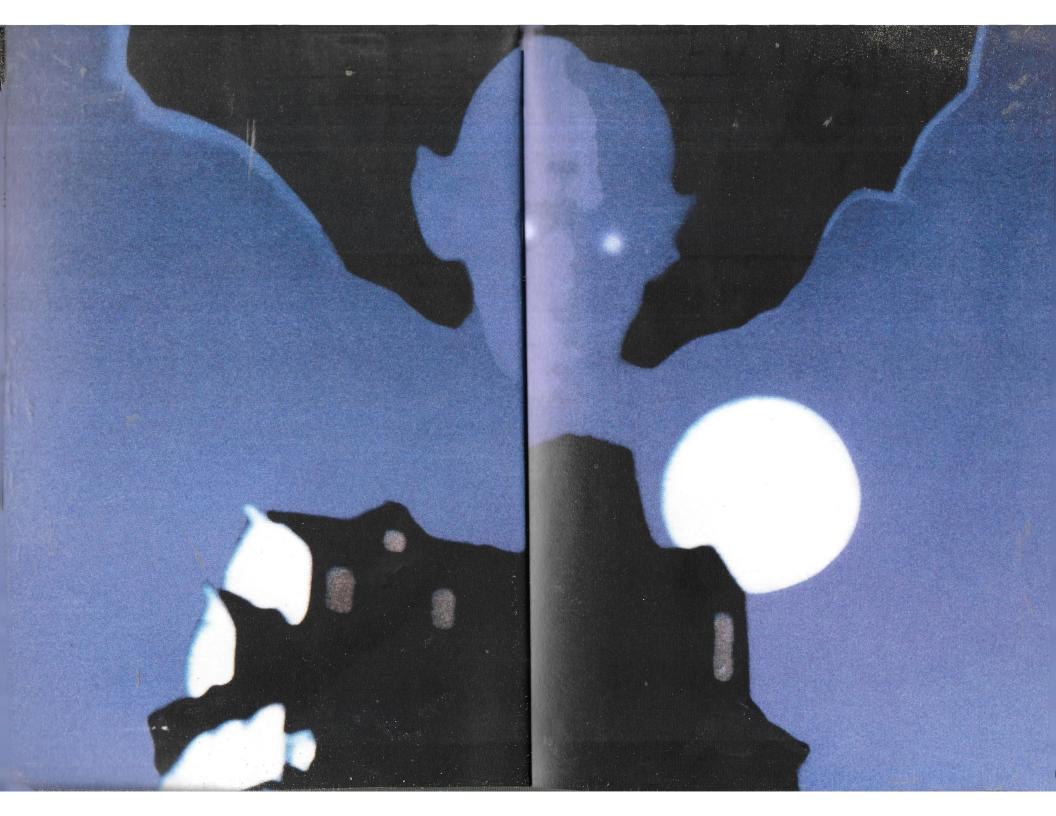
TOBE HOOPER'S

SAIEM'S OI

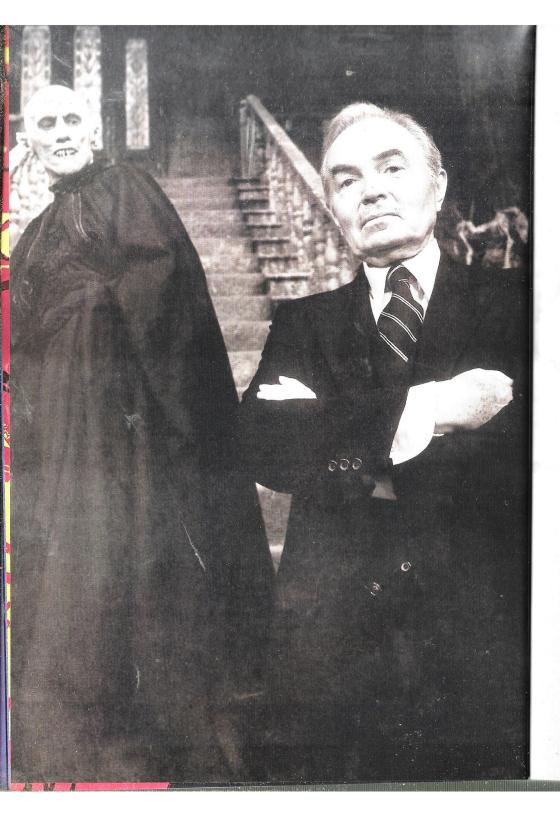
EDITED BY TONY EARNSHAW











TOBE HOOPER'S

STUDIES IN THE HORROR FILM

EDITED BY TONY EARNSHAW

CENTIPEDE PRESS
LAKEWOOD, COLORADO



Life in a Small Town: The Making of S Tony Earnshaw	
Iony Earnshaw Interview with Stephen King (1979) Paul Gagne	
Paul Gagne	29
On the Set of Salem's Lot	
Bill Kelley	45
Interview with Tobe Hooper (1979)	
Bill Kelley	67
An Interview with Tobe Hooper (201	
Tony Earnshaw	79
Interview with Richard Kobritz (1979))
Bill Kelley	121
Interview with Reggie Nalder (2004)	
David Del Valle	141
Interview with Jules Brenner (2008)	
Jerad Walters	159
Interview with Richard Kobritz (2012)	
Tony Earnshaw	169
Interview with James Mason (1979)	
Miles Beller	203
Interview with David Soul (2002)	
Tony Earnshaw	213
Interview with Geoffrey Lewis (2007)	
Tony Earnshaw	231
Interview with Lance Kerwin	
Randy Waage	241
Interview with Joshua Bryant (2013)	
Tony Earnshaw	243
Interview with Susan Sukman McCray	(2007)
Tony Earnshaw	251
Gallery	257
	269
Salem's Lot: The Screenplay	283
Credits and Acknowledgements	322

This is a Centipede Press Book Published by Centipede Press 2565 Teller Court, Lakewood, Colorado 80214

Package contents copyright © 2013 by Centipede Press Tony Earnshaw introduction and interviews

© 2002, 2006, 2007, 2012, 2013 by Tony Earnshaw Interview with Stephen King © 1980 by Paul Gagne Bill Kelley article on *Salem's Lot* and interviews © 1979 by Bill Kelley Interview with Reggie Nalder © 2013 by David Del Valle

Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders, and the publisher apologizes for any unintentional omission.

We would be pleased to hear from any not acknowledged here and undertake to make all reasonable efforts to include the appropriate acknowledgement in any subsequent editions.

All rights reserved.

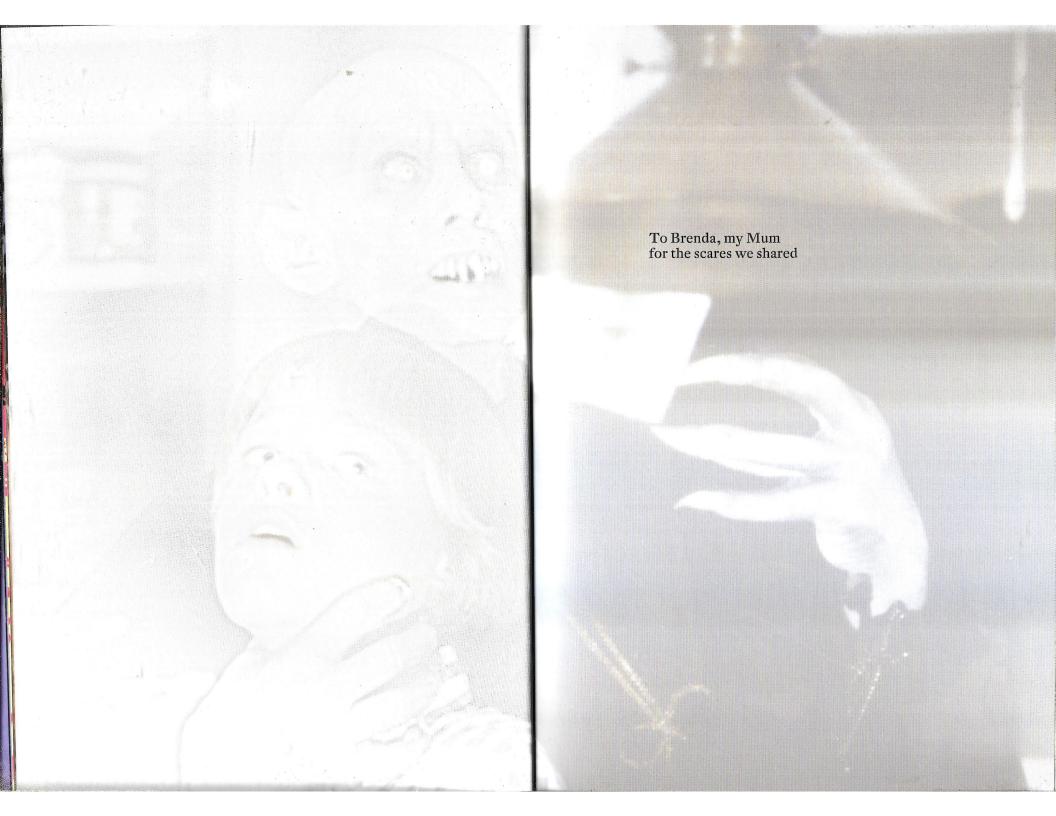


ISBN 1-933618-06-x (pbk.: alk. paper) ISBN 1-933618-07-8 (hc.: alk. paper)

Printed in the United States on acid-free paper.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

January 2014 www.centipedepress.com





Life in a Small Town: The Making of Salem's Lot TONY EARNSHAW

In 1979 a visionary young producer at Warner Bros. got his hands on a property that had been ricocheting around the studio for years. The project was *Salem's Lot*. The young producer was 38-year-old Richard Kobritz. And the end result—a deliciously creepy film about a tiny New England town infested with vampires—completely redefined the concept of modern televisual horror.

Three decades later Kobritz, leading man David Soul and character actor Geoffrey Lewis recall the making of a ground-breaking movie. This is how it happened.

"Ben Mears has been away too long. But now, at last, he's come home. Home to the childhood memories, to the old familiar faces, to a life unmolested by time. Home to Salem's Lot, a town too good to be true. Something is happening. Something terrible..."—theatrical trailer

Salem's Lot.

Two words designed to send a shudder up the spines of thousands of thirty- and forty-somethings on both sides of the Atlantic

who, as children, stayed up late to watch what has since passed into television history as a landmark slice of classic horror. Now, as adults, they occasionally re-visit the quiet little town of Salem's Lot in their dreams. Memory is a powerful thing—particularly when tainted by night terrors involving the ominous, black-clad figure of one of the most memorable vampires ever put on film: Mr Barlow.

I was one of those kids. As a teenager I watched the British TV premiere of *Salem's Lot* and was scared witless by its bravura style and unapologetic, no-nonsense approach to horror. Almost 30 years later the show still brings me out in goose pimples. Suddenly I'm 15 years old again, and grinning, evil Ralphie Glick is scratching at my bedroom window as I cower beneath the sheets.

The story is a simple one. Ben Mears, a youngish novelist, haunted and psychologically damaged by the nightmares of his youth, returns to his home town of Jerusalem's Lot, in Maine, in a bid to exorcise his personal demons. He will turn his terrors into fodder for a new book—a book that will focus on the town's legendary haunted house and the sinister stories that have always surrounded it. The supreme irony is that the decaying old mansion, the Marsten House, has just attracted a new owner—an enigmatic English antiques dealer named Straker with an equally mysterious partner, Mr Barlow, who no one has ever seen. Together they slowly transform the sleepy town into a nest of vampires.

It was the show's writer, Paul Monash, who, after watching the three-hour epic, concluded: "This is a benchmark in television horror." It is a perfectly apt and fitting description for a miniseries that pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable on television much further than anyone had previously attempted. And what was not allowed on TV was spliced into more extreme overseas versions—more gore and shocks geared towards a theatrical release in Europe, the Far East and Australia.

Yet Salem's Lot almost didn't happen. In the three years between the publication of Stephen King's runaway best-seller in 1975 and Kobritz actually reading the book, Warner Bros had bought the



Two souls in sync: producer Richard Kobritz (left) and best-selling author Stephen King found themselves to be kindred spirits when it came to adapting *Salem's Lot* for the small screen.

movie rights. Still, successive writers, among them Larry Cohen and Stirling Silliphant, had failed to nail the storyline and transfer a 400-page blockbuster into a cohesive feature film.

Enter Richard Kobritz. At that point in his career Kobritz was Executive Vice President of Production (Television) at Warner's and had just enjoyed a success with a TV movie called Someone's Watching Me, directed by relative newcomer John Carpenter. A movie buff and horror aficionado, he saw opportunities in Salem's Lot that could be exploited on television where time restrictions of movies were less of a problem. Why shoehorn a sensational story into 90 minutes when TV presented filmmakers with the chance to develop it over three hours or more? He picked up a dormant project that was gathering dust, hired a new writer, added his own touches and came up with a fresh take on a genre that had had his

fellow executives foxed. The balance shifted from film to television and Kobritz got the green light.

"I was looking for something and *Salem's Lot* was always sitting there," recalls Kobritz today. "Every time they'd do a new screenplay the feature department would reject it. We would cross the corridor and say 'What are you doing with *Salem's Lot?* I think we can do a better job of it.' Finally, [after] pestering them, they acquiesced and we got the project."

Paul Monash, "a very, very fast writer" according to Kobritz, turned in a screenplay that ran to 190 pages—a far fuller exploration of the story than the 115 or 120-page efforts of previous writers whose work had had to be truncated to fit the time constraints of a feature film. Says Kobritz: "There's just too much in the book and it's the building of those characters that you begin to know: the real estate guy who's a philanderer, the town tramp, the alcoholic, the cop who's a little corrupted, the priest who's weak and is an alcoholic. All of that stuff takes time. In a feature screenplay you just didn't have that time. You'd have to go right to it. I think that [we were] able to build [the story] so that by the end of the first night, when the kid pops out of a coffin, we were able to hook you."

The status of *Salem's Lot* as a modern horror classic had TV directors queuing up to land the job. Kobritz preferred John Carpenter. But Carpenter, riding high on the success of *Halloween*, was prepping *The Fog.* Seeking another Young Turk with a style uncorrupted by the restrictive rules of television, Kobritz hired Tobe Hooper. In a career that began in Grand Guignol style with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Hooper has struggled to match that audacious debut. *Salem's Lot*, a TV movie that relied on terror as opposed to visceral shocks, is another undeniable highlight.

Casting was key, and Kobritz had to run the gauntlet of "safe" TV names suggested by the studio. The suits wanted either David Janssen, then starring in *Harry O*, or James Garner. Both men were middle-aged; their best years were behind them. Kobritz wanted his hero, anguished writer Ben Mears, to be a young man in his

thirties. Soul, an established TV star with four seasons of *Starsky* and Hutch under his belt, was quickly locked into the role. As his nemesis, the coldly avuncular, malevolent Straker, Kobritz took a chance on a 70-year-old former matinee idol—the Englishman James Mason. Located purely by chance at London's Dorchester Hotel, Mason was sent a script. He liked it, signed a contract and a few short weeks later was on location in the northern California town of Ferndale, which doubled as the New England town of the novel. His wife, the actress Clarissa Kaye, also joined the cast. Interviewed by the L.A. Herald Examiner in August 1979, Mason talked up the project, drawing pertinent comparisons between what can be achieved on the small screen as opposed to cinema.

"[Salem's Lot] is much truer to vampire lore and legend than was the recent feature film Dracula—there were too many inconsistencies in the movie. In one instance a cross could stop a vampire, in another it couldn't," he said. "The story wasn't tightly written. Given the time TV movies and miniseries can now run, much more can be accomplished on television now than in feature films."

The rest of the ensemble was bulked out with familiar faces. Bonnie Bedelia took the role of Soul's love interest, doctor's daughter Susan Norton. Ed Flanders played her father. Lew Ayres came on board as Mears' old schoolteacher. Lance Kerwin became Soul's protégé vampire killer. Geoffrey Lewis was the resident grave-digger. George (*Basic Instinct*) Dzundza was corpulent trucker Cullie Sawyer. Julie Cobb, daughter of screen veteran Lee J. Cobb, was hired as Cullie's philandering wife. Fred Willard played her boss and lover. And, in a nod to Stanley Kubrick, one of his idols, Kobritz reunited Marie Windsor and Elisha Cook, Jr. 23 years after they played man and wife in *The Killing*, as landlady Eva Miller and town drunkard Weasel Phillips.

"For the town tart we had originally brought in Kim Basinger, but she was tired of playing tramps and trollops. It was such a vapid part. What we cared about at that stage was to get somebody who could *act*. And Julie could act. We put together a prestigious cast," recalls Kobritz.

A shooting schedule of 40 days was agreed with production beginning in late July and running until the very last day of August, 1979. Filming commenced in the distant California tourist town of Ferndale—a Victorian "village" 600 miles north of the Burbank headquarters of CBS. Ferndale was comprised of beautiful late 19th and early 20th century New England architecture that would double for the fictional settlement of Salem's Lot, Maine. The village was so remote that Kobritz, Hooper, Soul and Co had to change flights in San Francisco just to reach their location.

The vast majority of the buildings that appear in Salem's Lot were real homes, stores or businesses. The exterior of "Straker & Barlow—Fine Antiques" was a former doctor's cottage built in 1884. Located at 219 Francis Street, it still exists and is immediately recognizable. Crockett Realty, run by doomed lothario Larry Crockett, is the Faulkner Building across the street at 248-250 Francis Street. The movie's main set was, however, the brainchild of production designer Mort Rabinowitz. The façade of the Marsten House was constructed over an isolated farmhouse high up on Bluff Street, close to Grizzly Bluff Road. Situated between two cemeteries and perched on a little knoll, it was the perfect setting for the vampire's lair: the original haunted house. As Lew Ayres would later remark: "Every town has one."

Kobritz and Hooper wanted the Marsten House to be a big, impressive presence seen from every single part of Salem's Lot. The malevolent heart of the film's story, it loomed over the characters, spreading an evil shadow over everything it touched. Creating the Marsten House was a Herculean task. Sections of the building were flown in by helicopter. It was built on site, with construction crews, including local labourers, working seven days a week to finish the job in time for the cast to begin filming.

One incident summed up the rapidity of the transformation, as Soul remembers: "One afternoon we were out in front of the house. I looked down onto the county road below and, all of a sudden, this car comes around the bend and crashes. The driver had lived in the community for 30 years and was so used to seeing something else up



Richard Kobritz on set at Burbank with actor Reggie Nalder playing the feral Barlow. It was Kobritz's decision to make King's central vampire a throwback to Max Schreck in F.W. Murnau's 1922 silent classic, *Nosferatu*.

there on that hill. All of a sudden this house was up there! He didn't know what to do with himself so he hit a telephone pole."

A significant chunk of the film's \$3.9 million budget went on the look of the house—the rotting interior of which became a cesspool of evil and a mirror of the vampire's festering soul. It was a far cry from the house in King's book but a change that Kobritz believed was ultimately a correct one. He called it "a crumbling ruin inside but an immaculate façade outside."

"The interior sets of the Marsten House were very spooky but it wasn't *really* that spooky until they lit it. Then it really became eerie and weird," says David Soul. "But I never really had a problem with that. The only place that was really ghoulish was the basement room where the vampires were."

The vampires in the Hooper/Kobritz/Soul version of Salem's Lot are different to those envisaged by Stephen King in his novel. The most telling change was in transforming the dapper, elegant Mr Barlow of the book to the snarling, rodent-like, blue-tinged fiend of the film. The decision was taken by Richard Kobritz, and it is one he has never regretted. "Philosophically a novel is a novel, a screenplay is a screenplay and they are not the same thing," he asserts. "Great novelists are lousy screenwriters and great screenwriters are lousy novelists. So what worked perfectly in the novel I thought would work terribly for us. [In the Dracula movies] you had that loquacious, smarmy vampire who was more a seductive vampire and a seducer than the essence of evil. If you played the essence of evil and went back to what we think of vampires—going back to Nosferatu—we thought it worked much better."

The non-speaking role of Barlow was given to cadaverous Reggie Nalder, the hatchet-faced heavy of *The Manchurian Candidate* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* whose high cheekbones, gaunt features and burned, pock-marked face meant he needed very little make-up to become the imposing, glowing-eyed demon of the story. It was an inspired piece of casting and remains one of the highlights of the film. "Reggie Nalder...he was born for that role!" says Soul with a laugh. "He had worked in Hollywood for a long, long time. Here was a guy who just salivated. He was a weird-looking character and he looked just like Barlow. He was just a guy but once he put that make-up on...Boy!"

The other dark force in Salem's Lotis Richard K. Straker, played with cold menace by James Mason. Everyone involved with the film has good memories of the classy Yorkshireman who relished playing what he described as a "vampire wrangler." Kobritz saw Straker as a high society snob who looked down on the good people of the town with barely concealed condescension. Soul remembers being impressed and nervous. "[The sequence in the antique shop] was the first scene in which I acted with him. I thought 'Oh my

Christ, I'm working with James Mason.' It sort of worked for me and helped me, because I could take that and put it into what I was doing. You walked on the set and Straker was there. You can really tell a pro; he's not all over the place. He's clear and to the point. Part of it was James Mason and part of it was the fact that he was Straker—he embraced the role. I don't remember why it was such an impactful moment but I was in awe of this guy. I can't imagine anybody but James Mason doing that part. I got on famously with James. I just adored the man."

It is Straker who turns the core of the story, and who claims the film's first victim. There is something horribly real about Danny and Ralphie Glick returning home through the woods, becoming disorientated and falling victim to something dreadful in the dark. The missing boy soon turns up: wrapped in black plastic in the bowels of the Marsten House, gently revealed by the hands of Straker, the vampire's servant.

It was always the intention of Kobritz, Hooper and Monash to depict evil through the corruption of innocence. Of all *Salem's Lot's* unforgettable moments, none chills the blood more than the floating figure of little Ralphie Glick, emerging through mist to feed on his own brother, played by Brad Savage. Thus the evil begins — with the transformation of a child into a most plausible creature of the night.

Kobritz says he wanted audiences to accept the notion that youth could mask the very essence of evil; he was, after all, out to frighten people. "That was always very appealing—it's there to infiltrate every soul in *Salem's Lot* and if you can infiltrate the soul of a young person they'll only grow up to beget other vampires, other evil. If you can put a child in jeopardy tastefully then I think you've really succeeded in the horror genre."

The method used to make Ralphie appear at his brother's window was simplicity itself. Back in 1979, however, it was considered the height of technical accomplishment. No-one wished to use wires as they would obviously be visible. Instead juvenile actor Ronnie Scribner was placed in a body cast fixed to the end

of a boom, which was masked by his clothing. The sequence was then shot in reverse, allowing the mist that precedes him to billow in the opposite direction to where it should actually go. When the film was played correctly it appeared that the vampire was floating towards the glass and coming through it.

"I tell you something: the thing that scared me the most in that film was the kid coming through the window. Scared the living shit out of me!" says Soul with a shudder. "But it was so simply done, which is one of the things I loved about this film and why it had such an impact. It's a lesson about creative preparation, simplicity and economy—all of these things that work."

Another sequence that adds to the general sense of unease involves David Soul, a home-made crucifix and the corpse of the Glick brothers' mother, lying beneath a sheet in the town morgue. By this point in the film the audience is more than aware of the evil that is spreading through Salem's Lot. Ben Mears is battling with the realisation that the town is afflicted by a curse. Underneath a sheet, not too far away, lies a dead woman. She does not remain dead for long...

Richard Kobritz is big enough to admit his mistakes, and he points to the destruction of Marjorie Glick as one of the low points in the film. Yet the resurrection of the loving mother as a grey-skinned, wild-eyed harpy, with Soul's trembling, terrified response, remains a high point; only her demise—she merely fades away—disappoints. The scene fell victim to a scheduling shake-up at CBS. When the editing of another four-hour miniseries ran over, *Salem's Lot* was switched into its designated slot. With neither the time nor the budget to finish the scene to his satisfaction, Kobritz reluctantly had to sign it off. "Things go wrong," he says with a shrug. "I still cringe. We couldn't do anything with it, both in schedule and post-production. Today, with CGI, her demise would have been far better. The rest of it is superb, and that's the tragedy—it's the way that we get rid of her that is bad. It's just a mediocre cheat."

The level of horror that Kobritz and Hooper aspired to deliver

naturally meant some fancy footwork with the CBS censors. For a theatrical release in several overseas territories Kobritz tailored the script and introduced subtle changes. One moment showed the moment of impact when James Mason picks up Ed Flanders, playing the town doctor, and thrusts him onto a wall-full of antlers, leaving him gruesomely impaled. There were others—all of which had to carefully circumvent the studio.

"I did something very sneaky," says Kobritz with a knowing smile. "Every time there was a scare sequence I had the script broken into shots. As opposed to a paragraph describing it, each shot would be "close-up of the eyes," "close-up of a knife." It may have taken four pages to explain what the scene was but detailing each individual shot meant the network then okayed it, never realising that they were okaying individual shots. When the two censors at CBS—who were women, and one was quite elderly at the time—were shocked looking at it, I was able to say "Wait a minute, you approved this script. Shot 379 of the antler piercing Ed Flanders...you okayed that shot." And in each instance we were able to get it through.

"We shot maybe two or three moments that were more explicit. The one I remember the most was Ed Flanders being shoved into the antlers. They would never let a guy be hung on antlers in a television version and all of that stuff we added on. They were like a shot here and a shot there—little isolated things like that. Nothing big. The staking of the vampire was lengthened by maybe two shots, having Soul take the stake and hammer it down. We would add a "crunch' in post-production for the theatrical version so he really felt like he was going through a rib cage.

"They had a final laugh, though. When it was originally shown on CBS, for the vampire staking and the first appearance of the vampire they lowered the lighting on the film. The brightness was de-emphasised so it was darker than it ever was when watching it theatrically. And they admitted to that. They admitted in the *New York Times* that they would on purpose darken certain sequences because it was too vivid."



The final component in the Kobritz master plan was the music. To compose the theme and incidental music for *Salem's Lot* Kobritz hired Harry Sukman, the brilliant pianist who had won an Oscar in 1961 for the Franz Liszt biopic *Song Without End*. Later he worked in London on the score for the Frank Sinatra thriller *The Naked Runner*. From the mid-'60s onwards Sukman built his reputation further composing for serial television including *Doctor Kildare*, *The High Chaparral* and *Bonanza*.

Richard Kobritz was a Sinatra fan and hired Sukman to handle the score of *Someone's Watching Me*. Two years later *Salem's Lot* became his last major piece of work. Working from the logic that "all music is sound but not all sound is music" Sukman attended a screening and began work on a score that combined elements of drama, mysterioso and the classical works that had inspired him in the past. He created a separate theme for each individual character

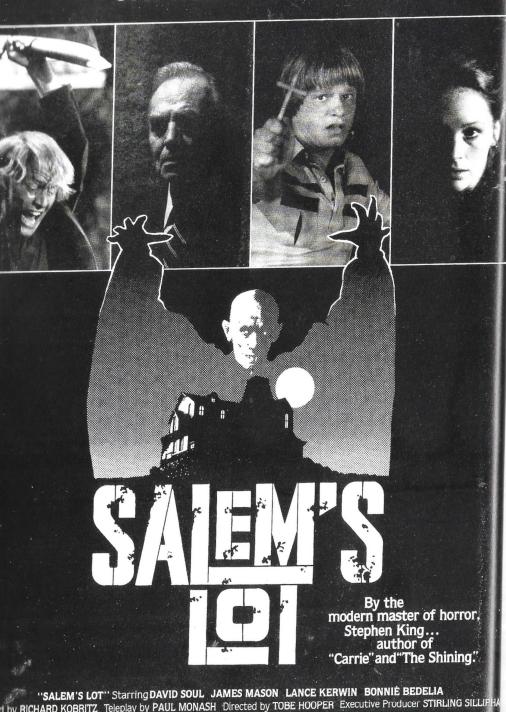
and was particularly keen to stress the romantic involvement of Ben and Susan. The final film reflected the beauty of the young couple's all-too-brief love affair amidst the darkness of the horror.

Sukman's daughter Susan McCray recalls the process: "A composer is always "under the gun." My father was sent the script to get an idea of what he was going to see and work with. He then went in to Warner Bros. to see the film. I remember he was very impressed because he called home right after seeing it. He came home and started to write themes for each character, which was the norm for him. He was told he had ten days before he had to score the picture at the studio. There were two scoring sessions and I went to the first because I wanted to hear the main title, which I thought would sound very exciting with a big orchestra. He loved the way it turned out."

Sukman's music received an Emmy nomination, as did the film's distinctive opening credits designed by Gene Kraft. For Richard Kobritz, who would later go on to films such as *Christine* and *Alien Nation*, it was a proud moment. "Horror pictures don't get nominated for Emmys, usually, so it was terrific. I want the audience in television to know exactly what this picture's gonna be about when it starts as opposed to starting on a totally different foot and then working our way in. I wanted people to know: we're here to *scare* you."

Looking back on his visit to the quiet little town of Salem's Lot, David Soul has only good memories: "As a participant in the film I'm very proud of it. The performances and performers were unique, the music was simple and clear, it was a good story and, like a lot of things back then, you could still be surprised by television. The film works and it's proved the test of time. It's a real classic—just terrifying."

Perhaps the most frightening film ever made for television.



"One of the best horror films that has ever been made for television."

An Interview with Stephen King

PAUL GAGNE

How did *Carrie* develop from your initial story idea into the finished novel?

Originally it was going to be a story. It was going to be a short story, and I'd been publishing a lot with the men's magazines back then. I had gotten an idea about a girl who is just at the very bottom, the pits, of the high school pecking order, with just nowhere to go and everybody just turning on her. Then I wanted her to turn and get her own revenge on them through some kind of a wild psychic talent. I'd read an article a long time ago in *Life* magazine about a case of telekinesis that involved a young girl, and the hypothesis said that a lot of this stuff comes from young people. So I sat down and began it, and what I really saw as I started to write this was that it was impossible for it to be a short story because there was too much material. In order for you to really be delighted when *Carrie* turns

This interview with Paul Gagne first appeared in Famous Monsters of Filmland, issues 162 (February 1980) and 164 (May 1980).

and destroys everything you have to see her really put upon. So that was really the genesis and the development.

How do you feel about Brian De Palma's film of Carrie?

Ithink it was very good. First of all, I put this in the context of all the really good fantasy novels I've seen turned into really cruddy pictures, because people don't care. A lot of people in Hollywood, all they see is the buck. That's where their eye is, and they're perfectly willing to take a fine fantasy novel, something by Fritz Leiber or H.P. Lovecraft, and turn it into a piece of drive-in tripe that's gonna play for two weeks and then it's gonna be gone. And they don't care because they only laid out about four hundred thousand dollars on the picture anyway, and they made back the negative cost and another million, and everybody goes home happy. It's enough to make you cry, if you really like fantasy, to watch this kind of stuff go on. They only had a small budget with Carrie, but the people who were involved had kind of made an agreement that it wasn't gonna be a cheap drive-in picture. Everybody put out really hard, and I think they made a really good picture out of it. It's not in the league of something like Apocalypse Now or The Deer Hunter or any other picture you want to name that walked away with all the awards, but it was a very decent picture.

Were you involved at all in the production of Carrie?

Not except in the most basic way. There were a number of offers for the film rights on *Carrie*, and the fact that it didn't do too well in hardcover didn't seem to make any difference. It was there, it was filmable; it had a lot of things that I feel movie makers must look for. One of these is a storyline that's going to interest your basic movie-going audience, let's say 15 to 32, or whatever. And of the offers that were presented before us, I was the one who suggested that we go with Paul Monash, who produced the film, because I'd seen his other work and I thought that he was the sort of guy who

would make a decent picture. And he did! Beyond that, I wasn't involved. I wasn't invited. I kept my nose out of it, because one of the things movie-makers buy when they purchase a book for film is the right to a little autonomy!

What inspired your second novel, 'Salem's Lot?

I was teaching Dracula at that time. I was teaching school, and there was a course called "Fantasy and Science Fiction," and Dracula was one of the books. We got sitting around and rapping at the dinner table about what would have happened if Dracula came back today, in modern dress. And my first reaction was that he'd go to New York and get run over by a taxi cab! But it wouldn't go away. And when I was bored or just sitting around, it kept coming back to that question, "What would happen if Dracula came back today?" And I put him in different settings - I put him in the West, I put him in the city, and I finally put him in my own native New England. It was kind of like, you know, the three lights, the three bars, jackpot. It wouldn't go away, and the more I thought about it, the better it began to seem to me. And finally I had to sit down and write it. A lot of things came into play. The Dracula thing was the basis but I started thinking about the old E.C. comics, you know, the vampire stories, and I thought maybe I'd work this in. And I started to think about Thornton Wilder's play, Our Town. And Peyton Place, too. Both of which tried to get below the surface of the sort of "everything's all right," the makeup to what's real. It was very exciting to write that book and to try to balance those three things off. And I think they work in the book to varying degrees. It was fun to write.

What is your feeling about the television movie based on 'Salem's Lot?

Well, David Soul, who plays Ben Mears, looks just right! You couldn't improve on that! I'm a little bit disappointed in the vampire,

Barlow. They turned him into Nosferatu. If you've ever seen the Max Shreck *Nosferatu*, then you've seen Barlow as he is presented in this miniseries on CBS. He looks properly repulsive and properly horrible, and I'm sure he'll scare people. I think that what really bothers me about it is that it also demonstrates a certain bankruptcy of originality. But they were very dogmatic on the idea that in order to be horrible, the vampire can't be presented in a Frank Langella way. It can't be presented like Louis Jourdan in the *Dracula* that was on PBS. He had to be repulsive.

A traditional, very stylized characterization?

Yeah. It was okay for me if they wanted to make him repulsive. What I didn't like about it was that they felt they had to make him into something that had already been done before. That's not the only way to judge, and it may be just a straw in the window.

Who was cast as Barlow?

He's a character actor. He didn't have much to say in the teleplay. His name is Reggie somebody, and I understand that he's naturally quite ugly. With make-up and everything, he's just horrendous—it's horrible! But James Mason plays Straker, the vampire's familiar; David Soul plays Ben Mears, Bonnie Bedelia is Susan Norton. There's a host of other Hollywood character actors in the thing who somehow seem right. I think the acting is good.

There's a lot of very visual gore and violence in the book, and that usually meets with a lot of friction getting onto TV. Were a lot of changes made in that respect?

Paul Monash was very careful to substitute a lot of this bitchy charm for a lot of the real outright gore and violence. There is a lot of gore and violence in the movie—the staking of the vampire, the vampires overrunning the town. But CBS did not allow it on the air.

I was pretty happy with it. Most of what television touches seems to turn to absolute drivel, and it is particularly true of films made for TV. The horror is usually toned down so much that the film just isn't very exciting. I really feel that Richard Kobritz and Tobe Hooper did a lot to keep that from happening with *Salem's Lot*. The gore and violence in the novel were toned down for the film, but they still managed to maintain the fright and intensity of the story.

Do you have any specific likes and/or dislikes regarding the film?

There are several things that I disliked about the film. First of all, I really objected to the make-up concept they used to bring Barlow to the screen. The fact that they wanted to make him truly horrifying rather than charming and sophisticated didn't bother me, but they made him look too much like the vampire in *Nosferatu*. This is the third time that that same make-up has been used, and I think they could have been more original. The other thing that bothered me a lot was the fact that CBS chose to show the two parts of the film a week apart, rather than on consecutive nights as they originally intended. A lot of the film's continuity and intensity was lost by doing that, and also by the constant commercial interruption. I saw the film at a special screening shortly before it was shown on TV, and there's quite a difference when you see it straight through.

Do you feel that the plot and character changes made from your novel work well in the film?

Yes. In order to get the story down to an acceptable length for filming, Paul Monash [the screenwriter] had to combine some of the characters and events. I felt that these combinations worked quite well. The story and characters probably could have been built up a little better in the first half of the film. One thing in particular that comes to mind is the priest, Father Callahan. There's a

scene where Barlow takes a cross away from him. The audience is given the impression that Barlow is too powerful a vampire to be affected by crosses, and that simply isn't true. Barlow can take the cross away because Callahan's faith is very shaky. This is explained in the book, but not in the film. Overall, though, I think Paul Monash did a fine job. I read his script. and it was quite good. The intensity of the story was even greater in his script than it was in the film!

How did you feel about the charge made in Barlow's location when they go to kill him? In the book, he was sort of "on the run," hiding in Eva Miller's cellar. In the film, he's back up in the Marsten House. In terms of theme, do you think this charge hurt the idea that Barlow was rapidly losing control of the situation?

No, not really. I think having him back up in the Marsten House added a nice touch to the film. It enhanced the drama and excitement of the film's climax. I didn't mind that at all.

One of the things in the book that Richard Kobritz felt strongly against showing in the film was Ben Mears' "vision" of Hubie Marsten hanging upstairs in the Marsten House. How did you feel about this?

In a way, I'm glad they didn't show that. The first couple of screen-plays, before the one Paul Monash did, all focused very heavily on that. Ben Mears' "vision" and the Marsten House were both very central to the story in those scripts, and that was wrong. I mean, if I wrote that story about the Marsten House, I would have called the book "The Marsten House." That's not what the story is about. So I think it was good that they didn't dwell on that too much. By the way, although I do respect the talents of the individuals who wrote those original scripts, the scripts were really terrible!

Maybe you should ask my wife that question, because she thought it looked phony, like a mock-up! I didn't feel that way, though. It probably could have been done a little better, but it was reasonably close to what I had envisioned. But something about the town itself didn't seem quite right to me. It didn't really look like a New England town. It looked more like what it really was: a California town. I also objected to the actors trying to use Maine accents. With the exception of the guy who played Mike Ryerson, they just weren't very authentic. That's something that if they couldn't do it authentically, they should have just left it alone.

Did you like the acting in the film?

Yes, very much. Particularly David Soul and James Mason.

Is there anything in the book that you would have liked to have seen in the film?

Well, there are two scenes in the book that I really like. One is when the vampire "children" attack the driver of the school bus in the middle of the night. The other is when Sandy McDougall discovers that her baby is dead and tries to feed him chocolate pudding. Obviously, those scenes were just too gruesome to be done for television.

Did you like the special effects and make-up?

Well, I already discussed the make-up for Barlow. As for the special effects, I really liked the scenes where a vampire would "float" through a window. This is the first time I've ever seen that effect done really well. It looked very realistic. That kind of effect has usually looked really tacky in the past. I remember one Dracula film where the vampire flies in through a window as a bat. The

transformation into Bela Lugosi is animated, and it really looks awful! One thing that bothered me in *Salem's Lot*, though, and I don't know if very many people noticed, but whenever a vampire comes in through a window, they keep using the same window. I mean, they could at least have hung different curtains on it for each scene!

How about the ending of the film? Did you like that?

It was nice, but a little bit confusing. For instance, how did Susan Norton become a vampire and follow Ben Mears and Mark Petrie to Guatemala? If you remember, the last time she is seen in the film it's daytime, before Barlow arises [in the book she's trapped in the Marsten House after dark, and Barlow gets to her then]. Then Ben kills Barlow just as he arises, so one is led to assume that she somehow got out of the house before nightfall [because the house is burned to the ground after Barlow is staked], became a vampire by some other means, and found nightly hiding places all the way from Maine to Guatemala. That's stretching credibility a bit too much.

In summing up your feelings about the *Salem's Lot* movie, to what extent do you feel the integrity and plot of the book were sacrificed for the sake of not being too gruesome for television?

Let me sum up by saying that when I first learned that the book was being done for television, rather than as a theatrical release, I was very disappointed. Television does tend to take quite a bit out of a story to avoid the risk of offending the "average" viewer. But that initial disappointment did not extend to the finished product. It was done for television, but it was done *well* for television. It's funny, because most of the reviewers I've talked to since the thing was shown on TV seem to be expecting me to really come out against it, but I just didn't feel that way. Sure, it probably would have been better if it wasn't done for television, but I'm certainly not gonna run around screaming "They wrecked my fuckin' book!"

I have a lot of respect for Richard Kobritz, Tobe Hooper, and the *Salem's Lot* production crew, because they made what is definitely one of the best horror films that has ever been made for television.

I understand that you're also working on adapting some of the short stories in *Night Shift* as television movies.

I did that, and that was shot down by NBC. Basically, all the people that were involved with it on the creative end, myself included, were very happy with what we had. It was presented to NBC, who had the deal, and their standards and practices thing just said "No, too gory, too suspenseful, it's too intense." They axed it for those reasons, and it's now gone over to the Martin Poll organization, who, the last I knew, were trying to develop it for theatricals. This is my script, and we'll see if anything happens. I don't think that they're working on it with any degree of speed or real enthusiasm at this point. I'm pretty sour on TV.

How do you feel seeing your work adapted into the theatrical film medium differs from the television medium?

Well, my only experience to date with the theatrical film medium has been with *Carrie*, and we already talked about that. I was pretty happy with that. But with TV, I feel like I've been bitten a number of times. I've been approached by the Aaron Spelling Group and two or three other groups, including the production company that had *Night Shift* for NBC. The pitch was, "TV needs another Rod Serling. Don't you want to come on and do a series of supernatural horror-type stories on TV? You'd get to introduce them; you'd become a STAR!" All those incentives, you know, the new Rod Serling, the new Alfred Hitchcock on TV, or something like that. And I'd tell these people, "You are in a position now where you can't, in one hour of prime time television, show somebody getting punched in the nose more than once. And you want to put horror on TV?" And my reaction is I don't want to do it simply because

I don't want to be on TV for six weeks, and then be axed because everybody tuned out because there was nothing there to watch! The basic philosophy behind terror, behind horror, is that the reader or the viewer has to believe that you're coming for it. Because if he doesn't believe it, if he just believes it's a game, it's worse than a sitcom! It's worse than *Happy Days*! Believe me, I'd much rather tune in to *Happy Days* than any kind of a weekly suspense program as TV could do it now.

Moving on to *The Shining*, what led to your writing that? Weren't you on vacation in Colorado when you were inspired by a hotel there similar to The Overlook in the novel?

The hotel was there, the Hotel Stanley, and it's up-country near Rocky Mountain National Park. Somebody told us we ought ago stay there—you know, Americana, part of western history, Johnny Ringo shot down there, and all this other stuff—and finally, my wife and I did go up to the hotel. It was the last day of the season, and they let us stay there because we could pay cash—they'd shipped their credit card slips out. The hotel was totally empty except for us. We were the only guests, and yet all the service help was there. They were there by contract until the last day. And the band was there, playing in the deserted dining room with the chairs turned up on their tables, except for ours. It was very eerie! And I had an idea for a long time to write a book about a kid who was sort of a psychic receptor. It just seemed to all fall together.

What is the current status of the film?

As far as I know, Kubrick is editing it. Warners is giving a release date to their exhibitors and distributors of May 23. I don't know, and they don't know, and, believe me, nobody knows but Stanley Kubrick, and he won't talk. When he's ready, we'll all know it!

So you haven't seen any of the film yet or know what any of it is like?

Well, yeah. I've talked to Stanley on several occasions, and I've seen a lot of stills and transparencies. I would have seen rushes the day that I was there on the set, but they'd sent them all back to London before I arrived. Visually, it's stunning. You can see that from the big mural-sized pictures that they have, the blow-ups of the hotel—and the pictures from the shooting. I think that it's gonna be all right. I know from looking at the call sheets that go back two or three months when I was there that it follows the book very closely.

What changes has Kubrick made? Did he write the screenplay himself?

With a little help from a lady named Diane Johnson. She's written novels of her own and writes a lot of literary criticism. As far as what changes he's made, I'm sure that the movie will seem a lot different from the book, if only because it's seen through the eyes of Stanley Kubrick rather than the eyes of Stephen King. We're different people, and we've probably got fairly different perspectives on that whole story. But as far as actual changes, I only know for sure that the hedge animals are out and he's substituted a hedge maze.

Is there any chance of another novel, *The Stand*, being made into a film?

Yeah, I think that maybe it might happen. George Romero, the *Dawn of the Dead* guy, is quite interested in it, so we'll see. People say "Jesus, that's long. We can't make a movie out of that." But I think it could be done, if somebody really wanted to. It would cost a lot of money, I think.

How would you describe your characterization of the concepts "good" and "evil" in *The Stand*?

get a little more serious, then I'll write this, etc." You write what comes out, and that's all you can do. Otherwise, you start to lie, and that's no way to run the game. Fiction is lies anyway, and if you start to lie about the lies, you're really in terrible shape. I don't think you can deal with it on that level. That's the level that Harold Robbins deals with it on. It's no good. I've got some other things coming that I'm working on that I think are really horrible, with no redeeming social merit whatsoever! They're just awful things! We'll see what happens!

Are there any current plans to do The Dead Zone as a film?

There are a lot of people that are interested in it. We're not doing too much right now, because some of the deals have been TV and some of the deals have just been sort of distasteful to me personally. If something comes along that looks nice, I'll sell it in a minute.

Although *The Dead Zone* is very vivid in a literary sense, there isn't a lot of physical action in it. Do you feel it would adapt well into a film?

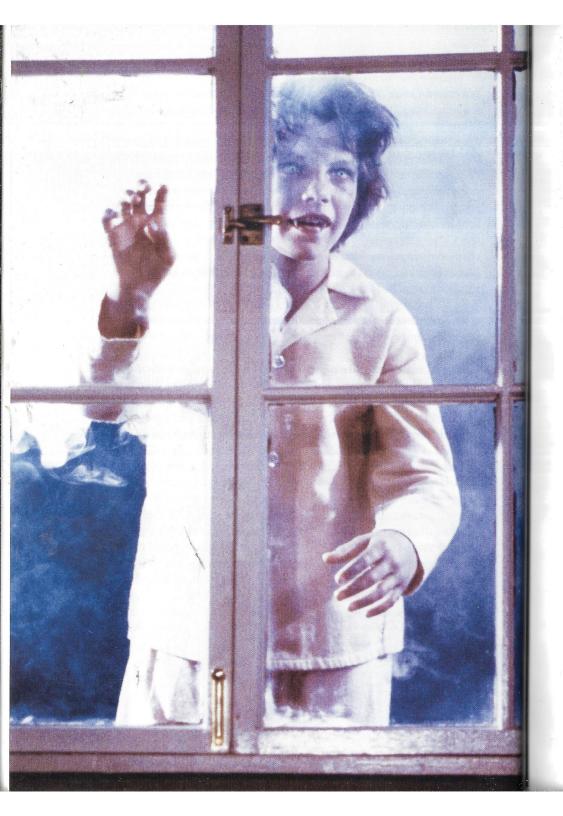
I think it'd be a pretty nice film. I think maybe some people who have a lot of money in Hollywood have steered clear of it because they, quite rightly, see it as a small film. And the tendency seems to be, more and more in Hollywood, to roll the dice for a lot of big bucks, between 20 and 25 million, whatever. There is quite a bit of action, with the car crash, the search for the murderer, the run through the house, and finally the scene in the town hall, and the fire. I think you could do a nice picture out of it, but I don't think it would be big in the sense that you could show Los Angeles being bombed or something.

What can you tell me about your soon-to-be-released non-fiction book?

It's called *Danse Macabre*, and Everest House is going to do it. It is a long essay, it's going to be about 70,000 words when it's done, that tries to cover horror in the media in America from, say, about 1950 to maybe 1980. I'm going to say 1980. Otherwise, I'm going to be revising the goddam thing ad infinitum to take in new stuff! We're going to do a lot of pictures with the book if we can get the permission, and I think we can. Hopefully, it'll be kind of incisive and maybe witty and informal. It's not going to be, by any means, scholarly or anything like that. But I like to talk about the movies, the TV programs, like *Outer Limits* and *Alfred Hitchcock* and all that stuff, and also somewhat about the radio and the magazines. You know, everything. Also maybe cultural phenomena like Kiss and the Sex Pistols, and stuff like that.

Is this in any way an extension of talking about horror a lot on speaking tours and such?

Yeah. It's easier to write it than it is to tell it. Let's face it—if you go on AM Pittsburgh or AM Hartford or something like that, you get ten minutes, and you can't talk about anything. You can crack a few jokes and you can let people know that the new book is out, but that's really all you can do. You can't get down to anything serious unless you have more time. And a book gives you all the time you need!





"...Peyton Place turning into vampires."
On the Set of Salem's Lot
BILL KELLEY

The man producer Richard Kobritz called upon to get him his vampire in *Salem's Lot* is Tobe Hooper, the director of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and the last person one might expect to find directing a glossy production for a major studio...much less one intended as a television miniseries. Yet the hiring of Tobe Hooper is only one incident in a production chronicle almost as complex as the story of *Salem's Lot* itself, which comes to TV November 17th and 24th on CBS.

Stephen King's 400-page novel of vampirism in contemporary New England was acquired four years ago by Warner Bros, who intended to produce it as a theatrical feature. At the outset, King and the studio agreed that he would not write the screenplay. He was busy with his own projects as a novelist (in less than a year, King's career would begin to soar). So Warners was left with the task of finding someone to adapt King's brilliant but complicated plot into something manageable as a normal movie—and without sacrificing the elements that made the book so powerful.

This article first appeared in *Cinefantastique*, volume 9, issue 2 (1980).

But over the course of the next two years, the studio was unable to come up with a satisfactory screenplay. Stirling Silliphant (who had adapted *In the Heat of the Night* and more recently *The Swarm*, and was also producing for Warners), Robert Getchell (*Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*) and writer/director Larry Cohen (whose independent feature *It's Alive* was a surprise sleeper for Warners in 1974) all contributed screenplays...all of them rejected by studio brass. *Salem's Lot* was becoming not only an impossible project, but a source of frustration: *Carrie*, a King novel filmed by Brian De Palma, was released in late 1976 and began racking up enormous profits. Warners was sitting on a potential goldmine, but could do nothing with it.

"It was a mess," King recalls. "Every director in Hollywood who's ever been involved with horror wanted to do it, but nobody could come up with a script. I finally gave up trying to keep a scorecard."

At one point, if only because Warners was running out of writers and directors to consider, Tobe Hooper's name was mentioned in connection with the *Salem's Lot* movie. But by then, interest in the project at the theatrical division was beginning to flag. Finally, it was turned over to Warner Bros Television, in the hope that a fresh approach—and the possibility of financial interest by a network—would revitalize it.

Enter Richard Kobritz. Kobritz was the 38-year-old vicepresident and executive production manager at Warner Bros. Television who had hired John Carpenter to direct a striking 1978 suspense telefilm, *Someone Is Watching Me*, starring Lauren Hutton. As a genre buff with an eye for new talent (Carpenter went on to direct *Halloween* three weeks after finishing *Someone Is Watching Me*), Kobritz at least stood a fighting chance of making some sense out of *Salem's Lot*.

Kobritz began by reading the already completed screenplays. "They were terrible," he says. "I mean, it isn't fair to put down anyone's hard work, but the screenplays just did not have it—and I think some of the writers would probably admit that. Besides,

the book is admittedly difficult to translate, so much is going on. And because of that, I think it stands a better chance as a television miniseries than a normal feature film."

So the decision was made to turn *Salem's Lot* into a miniseries and thereby lick the problem of its unwieldy length. Actually, though the production is technically labeled a miniseries, it is basically a four-hour movie (3½ hours, figuring commercial time) scheduled for successive nights.

Emmy-winning television writer Paul Monash was contracted to write a new, first draft teleplay. Monash had created the landmark dramatic series, "Judd for the Defense" (about a flamboyant lawyer in the F. Lee Bailey mold) during the late 1960s, and as a producer was responsible for the features Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, The Friends of Eddie Coyle, Slaughterhouse Five, and Brian De Palma's Carrie. Monash had also been producer of the mid-'60s TV series Peyton Place, a credit that Kobritz—who has referred to Salem's Lot as "...Peyton Place turning into vampires"—was aware of. Clearly, one key factor in a viable teleplay would be an intelligent combination of the huge number of characters in Salem's Lot. Monash pulled it off.

"His screenplay I like quite a lot," King offers enthusiastically. "Monash has succeeded in combining the characters a lot, and it works. He did try a few things that weren't successful the first time. In one draft he combined the priest, Father Callahan, and the teacher, Jason Burke, as a priest who teaches classes...and it just didn't work, so he split them up.

"Some things were left out because of time, some because it's television," says King. "My favorite scene in the book is with Sandy McDougall, the young mother, where she tries to feed her dead baby, and keeps spooning the food into its mouth. That won't be on TV, obviously."

Other changes were made by Kobritz, who takes a strong creative interest in the films he produces. His three major alterations to Monash's first script were: to characterize the vampire, Barlow, as a hideous, speechless fiend, not the cultured villain carried



over from the novel; to have the interior of Marsten House, which looms over the town of 'Salem's Lot, visually resemble the vampire's festering soul; and to keep Barlow in the cellar of his lair, Marsten House, for the final confrontation with the hero (in the book he is billeted in the cellar of a boarding house once his mansion is invaded, a concept Kobritz would later say, "...works in the book but wouldn't in the film."). Kobritz also pushed the killing of an important female vampire to the climax, to give her death more impact and provide the film with a snap ending.

With the example of such turgid, dramatically impotent "evil-in-a-small-town" miniseries as *Harvest Home* before them, Kobritz and Monash were determined to make *Salem's Lot* work despite the television restrictions against frightening violence. The project would be designed as a relentless mood piece where the threat of violence—rather than a killing every few minutes— sustained terror. And it would be cast with an eye toward good actors first, and TV names second.

But still, there was the matter of all those stakings, and a relentless murderer with no redeeming virtues..."CBS worried about a few things in the screenplay," King explains. "They worried about using a kid as young as Mark Petrie is in the book, because you're not supposed to put a kid that young in mortal jeopardy, although they do it every day in the soap operas.

"Paul Monash finally sent them a memo that I think covered it. He pointed out, for one thing, that *Carrie*—which was a CBS network movie—was the only movie that ever cracked the top five in the weekly ratings."

Next came casting. From the instant Barlow was designed to symbolize "the essence of evil," Kobritz had in mind Reggie Nalder—whom he remembered from Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and genre buffs recall from that film, Michael Armstrong's *Mark of the Devil* and Curtis Harrington's *The Dead Don't Die*. Kobritz's idea was to recreate the Max Schreck vampire from [F.W.] Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens*.

In a quirky touch, Kobritz also hired genre veteran Elisha

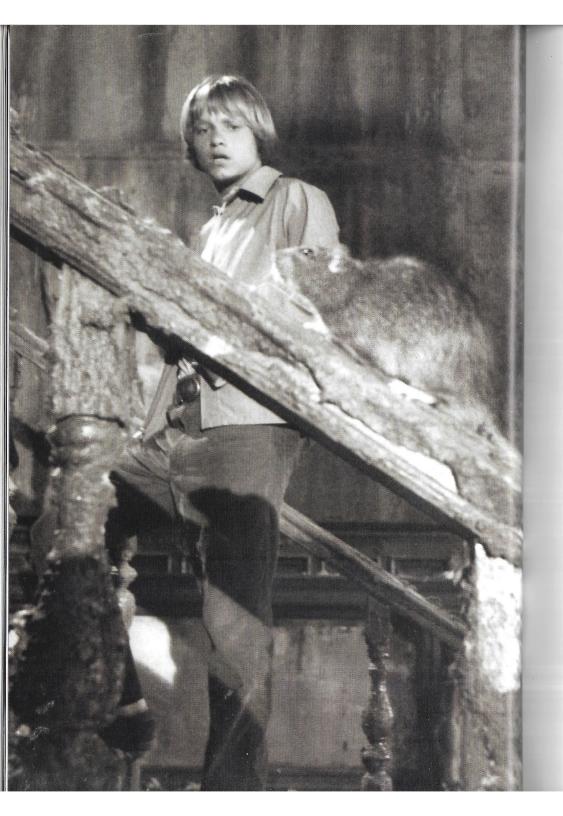
Cook, Jr. (*House on Haunted Hill, The Haunted Palace*) and former B-movie queen Marie Windsor to play Weasel, the town drunk, and Eva Miller, the landlady with whom he'd had an affair years before.

"That was an inside joke we threw in right from the start," Kobritz concedes. "I'm a Stanley Kubrick buff, and on purpose we've reunited them 23 years later after *The Killing*. In the script, it says Eva and Weasel were at one time married and then got divorced, so it was funny to think of that same couple from *The Killing*, 23 years later, now divorced—but still living together. It was also the first time since then, I think, that they'd worked in a movie and had scenes together."

The rest of the casting was less frivolous, and reflected the seriousness with which Kobritz wanted the whole enterprise to be regarded. Kobritz sent James Mason a copy of the Monash teleplay, offering him the role of Straker, the European antique dealer who has Barlow smuggled into Marsten House—and whose character had been expanded in the absence of a speaking Barlow. Mason loved the part and agreed to make his first appearance in a television drama since the medium's early days (several years earlier, he had not been told that 1974's *Frankenstein: The True Story* was not intended for theatrical release).

Key supporting roles went to Emmy nominee Ed Flanders (Bill Norton, a composite character who became both the heroine's father and the town doctor), Lew Ayres (Jason Burke, the local teacher) and Geoffrey Lewis (Mike Ryerson, the gravedigger). Bonnie Bedelia, an Oscar nominee ten years ago for *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, was cast as Susan Norton, who is on the verge of leaving 'Salem's Lot before she meets Ben Mears—played by David Soul.

David Soul? Though the hiring of Soul may shock or disappoint readers of the book who know him only through *Starsky and Hutch*, it marks a shrewd move by Kobritz. Soul's acting ability may sometimes have been concealed in *Starsky and Hutch*, but it wasn't in the telefilm *Little Ladies of the Night*, which happens to be the highest



rated TV movie ever made. His presence therefore guarantees an audience.

"I think the casting of David Soul is fine," says King. "I have no problem with that at all."

Soul also offers a strong counterpoint to Lance Kerwin (who starred in the well-reviewed—but poorly rated—1978 NBC series, James at 16), selected to play Mark Petrie. Kerwin has a brooding presence that undercuts his superficial physical resemblance to Soul, and the two actors—who join forces to destroy the vampires at the end of the film—project a strange chemistry when seen together.

Salem's Lot was budgeted at \$4 million—about norm for a prestige miniseries, with financing split between CBS and Warner Bros.—and a European theatrical release was planned from the start. It would, naturally, be shorter than miniseries length, but it would also contain violence not included in the TV version; for example, the staking of vampires would not occur below the camera frame, and one death in particular—Bill Norton's impalement on a wall of antlers—would be seen in graphic detail, while shot in a markedly restrained fashion for television.

Because of his oft-stated goal of having Salem's Lot like a feature, not a TV special (whether it was to be released theatrically or not), Kobritz and his staff hand picked production personnel capable of providing the right texture and depth under deadline pressure. Jules Brenner, who had shot the impressive NBC miniseries Helter Skelter, signed on as cinematographer; Mort Rabinowitz, a 23-year veteran of the film industry who was art director on Sydney Pollack's Castle Keep (for which he and his staff built a castle in Yugoslavia) and They Shoot Horses, Don't They?, was hired as production designer; and Harry Sukman, an Oscar-winning composer (Song Without End), who wrote the excellent music for Someone Is Watching Me and whom Kobritz describes as "a former cohort and protégé of Victor Young," was contracted to score Salem's Lot.

And Tobe Hooper was enlisted as director. Following a chain of events Kobritz describes at length in his interview, Hooper

was deemed the only appropriate person to direct *Salem's Lot*. Kobritz had screened for himself one recent horror film after another—usually films by highly praised neophyte directors. Some of the features Kobritz found intriguing. Others, like *Phantasm*, he remembers with a shudder of disbelief. None impressed him like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Hooper was called in for a meeting with Kobritz, and was signed.

It is important to note that the selection of Hooper did not signify an attempt to mimic the intensity of *Texas Chainsaw* in a television show, which would be frankly impossible. Kobritz was searching for a filmmaker with a confident visual style, a mastery of camera movement, and an ability to follow a script and adhere to a tight schedule. There was, apparently, never any concern that Hooper would not be able to direct a film that did not contain a large quota of violence.

"I think it goes without saying that if a man has a strong visual style and is also able to meet those other qualifications, his skills encompass more than the making of violent movies," says Kobritz. "I knew Tobe was our man from the day I met him. And he's come through like a champ."

Hooper was signed in late spring of this year, and one of his first tasks was a field trip to the location that would be used for most of the exteriors of 'Salem's Lot. In 1977, Tony Richardson had directed a Warner telefilm, *A Death in Canaan*, which was supposed to be set in a small, contemporary Connecticut town. Ferndale, a northern California town sixteen miles south of Eureka, and 75 miles south of the Oregon border, doubled perfectly as a bogus Connecticut location. Anna Cottle, associate producer for *Salem's Lot*, had been Richardson's assistant. She remembered Ferndale—and particularly the cooperation of the local inhabitants. After a brief scouting trip, Ferndale was chosen for *Salem's Lot*.

But in all of Ferndale, there was no house which could be used as a double for the Marsten House, so Rabinowitz and his staff were dispatched to Ferndale to build one. They found a cottage on a hillside overlooking Ferndale and the Salt River Valley; it was



Production designer Mort Rabinowitz transformed a modest Ferndale home into the Daddy of all haunted houses—the Marsten House—with the addition of a false façade. Afterwards the owners kept the lumber and made a tidy profit when they sold it.

decided to build a full-scale mock up of Marsten House around the existing cottage complex, complete with a stone retaining wall and several twisted, dead trees. The family residing in the cottage was paid \$20,000 and guaranteed all of the lumber from Marsten House once shooting was completed.

The filming of *Salem's Lot* began on July 10—in Ferndale. "It took 20 working days to build Marsten House from scratch," Rabinowitz recalls. "We put the last touches on it very late at night before shooting was to begin. I remember my assistants and I were up there painting, and someone drove on by the road just below us. All of a sudden, he slammed on his brakes and backed up, got

out of his car and just stood there staring at the house. 'My God, I've lived here 25 years,' he said, 'and I never noticed that house before!' I played along and just said, 'Gee, I don't know—we're just tourists.'"

Rabinowitz estimates the cost of the exterior Marsten House mock-up as \$100,000. Another \$70,000 was spent constructing the interior of the house—Kobritz's rotting embodiment of the vampire's soul—back at the Burbank Studios [in Los Angeles]. The interior rooms and passages of Marsten House posed the more difficult challenge for Rabinowitz and his staff. For one thing, there was the problem of creating atmosphere without going overboard.

"Its a very difficult line," admits Rabinowitz. "By the nature of the writing, you're going into a theatrical abstraction, and you must take it further than normal, but not too much further. It's trial and error. When I designed the interior, the first shots were way over, which I knew they would be, and I had to be careful in bringing them down not to lose all the gory description and so forth. When it's that fine a line, I'll intentionally go overboard and then gradually shave it back and back. I'd say it was two weeks from the first still photos and testing of the color lighting to the final result.

"I used a lot of plaster, so I could make huge craters all over the entire set and furniture so that it looked as though it was pockmarked, and from some of these larger openings in the walls I put a kind of epoxy or resin, and let it drip as if it were oozing from the interior, as if it were an open wound. We wanted a rotting, sick appearance, almost as if—in discussions with the director and producer—we were looking into the body, the heart of the vampire. It reflects his whole being more so than just a decayed house. So we decided to go for an abstract image.

"Then," Rabinowitz continues, "in front of the camera, we took the same material in medium shots and close-ups and just loaded it up so it would ooze and pour right in front of you. Sometimes it's very clear and at other times it's not too obvious, just a little glistening in the background. "There's a dark, greenish tint to the interior. We put down glaze after glaze after glaze, for the

proper amount of sheen, and then various shades of green, mixing it up with other colors so that it wasn't solid green."

Two other important duties for Rabinowitz were the building of the antique shop (Straker's business front) and the small South American village [Ximico, Guatemala] where the beginning and end of the film are set.

"The Latin town was shot on the Burbank backlot and [in] the San Fernando Valley Mission," says Rabinowitz. "We used the interior of the mission church, and I built an adobe-style native hut on stage.

"My decorator, Jerry Adams—who is fantastic—was responsible for most of what you see inside the antique shop. Ninety percent of what you see is his taste initially directed by me. But the individual pieces—all Jerry Adams. I also have an assistant, Peter Samish, who is only 28 but is brilliant. He's the son of Adrian Samish, the producer and former head of CBS—who was not popular among many people. So Peter has not gotten where he is because of Papa; he had a very rough time. But he was just so creative and inventive on this picture."

Rabinowitz, a stickler for accuracy, found that one of his most perplexing assignments was to come up with a coffin for Barlow. "It was designed special," he notes, "because there was no way to find anything like that. The research was difficult to come by—it's a 400-year-old coffin—but once I did find it, our cabinet shop and our antique shop here is so superb that they gave me exactly what I drew up, right on the nose. If I'd had to work at another studio, I don't think it would have come out as well, because they are superb—just the finest in our business."

Rabinowitz tries to be a perfectionist. A professional painter and sculptor, he has taught at UCLA and USC, and spends six months of each year at his Santa Fe, New Mexico studio, painting and sculpting for galleries. At 53, he is still excited by what he terms "that marvelous madness that is Hollywood," and he still finds his work there a challenge. For *Salem's Lot*, in the rush of production for television, there are things he would do over if time allowed.

"There is one interior of the Glick boy's bedroom," Rabinowitz confesses "where I overdid the color and blew the gag. I absolutely telegraphed it by making the room a sombre brown, so when the scene opens you're in that mood already. Then, when the vampire arrives, it's not as big a surprise. It's still a very effective scene, but I'd have toned down my part of it more."

In his interview, Hooper speaks of Rabinowitz with genuine awe. Rabinowitz worked closely with Hooper, and feels he developed an understanding of his personality. "He's very good-natured, extremely so," says Rabinowitz, "very warm, but very laid back. He's quite shy. But once he gains your confidence and you gain his, that stops. Was he articulate? With me, yes. He was very articulate. With others, not so much. It took time. It's a personality kind of thing. But he knows exactly what he wants."

But getting what he wants was another matter entirely for Hooper, particularly in the case of David Soul, who was also under pressure to perform. According to Soul, Hooper was articulate in relating to him what he wanted.

"I believe he is a good actor's director and I believe he will be even more so," observes Soul. "I think the problems of this film, which were primarily the special effects, the vampire obviously, and the fact that we were shooting out of continuity, made it difficult for him to spend the kind of time with the actors he'd have liked to.

"Many, many times we'd pull each other aside to talk and he'd say, 'Goddammit, David, I'm sorry we can't spend more time working out these relationships, but this just isn't the time to do it—so just hang in there.' He was concerned that everybody on the set was happy. He's a very gentle, very, very bright man. This picture, if nothing else, will seal his future, as an important director

right: Innocence versus ultimate evil: horror buff Mark Petrie (Lance Kerwin) comes face to face with vampire wrangler Richard K. Straker (James Mason) as Kurt Barlow (Reggie Nalder) looms over them. A posed publicity shot.



along with the Steven Spielbergs, the John Carpenters, the John Badhams—people like that."

Soul, who was cast two months before the start of production, was able to make suggestions that helped define his character a little better, but he feels some inconsistencies remain.

"Yes, there are a lot of inconsistencies, built into the script because the producers felt that since it's television, there needs to be this reiteration of the fears on Ben Mears' part—so the audience is constantly aware. That for me is not giving the picture everything it could have. There are only so many times Ben Mears can say, 'Did you ever have the feeling something is inherently evil?', you know? There are a million other ways to say that same thing. I much prefer the scenes such as the entrance of Straker with his cane, which comes far closer to creating true terror than dialogue can."

The scene with the cane—the first meeting of Mears and Straker—helps illuminate Soul's working relationship with Mason.

"There was a certain kind of awe to my working with Mason," Soul explains, "and I used that for the relationship between the two characters: Mears is intimidated by Straker. It sounds simplistic, but it works. I did not try to get to know Mason better, so it was as if, in my early scenes with him, this imposing stranger could be the evil coming from the house. And only as we got further into the picture did my curiosity as David Soul—and certainly as Ben Mears—manifest itself in a kind of relationship with the character. So I kept away from him in the beginning. Also, the way Tobe staged our scenes heightened the element of surprise. The scene where I meet him as he's walking with the cane is very well staged by Tobe, because I'm staring at the house and feeling all those disturbing sensations and memories and I back out almost out of the shot and then"—Soul gasps—"there he is behind me. These kinds of cinematic devices helped a lot, and that's Tobe.

"I was impressed by both Tobe and Mason. There were a lot of impressive people on this film, actors especially. Lew Ayres was the same as Mason in a way, though he was a little difficult to crack. He's a very orthodox and tough actor. He was a matinee idol, and he



On the antiques shop set in Burbank Tobe Hooper (center) gives directions to James Mason as producer Richard Kobritz looks on. Hooper was in awe of Mason throughout the *Salem's Lot* shoot.

considers himself still to be a star. But once that was broken down, it became a very warm relationship.

"Mason is fascinating. He's better than most TV actors and he's also a personality. He's got a mystique that he's built up over forty years and that's what you're watching also, and what you're playing opposite. I was surprised to find out how organically he works—he had a whole history for Straker. His conversations about the character were very intelligent.

"How did I change my own TV personality and still play a hero? It's a good question. I don't have a pat answer. Obviously, they're different characters. I think the accoutrements changed me somewhat—the glasses, the clothes. Also, I cleaned up my speech pattern a little bit. I sound like a writer, a man who's at home with words. In *Starsky and Hutch*, it was always dip-dip-dip, sort of half-finished sentences, a street jargon and repartee. This time, I stuck with the lines and the discipline of a well-written script. There's also a mysterious quality to Ben Mears and I tried to work with that. I didn't socialize a lot. It was a rough part, and, in a sense, I let the neuroses that were building up in David Soul because of the pressure work for the character.

"That's one area in which Tobe was very helpful and understanding. He listened.

"Have I seen *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*? No, but I do want to, very much, after working with Tobe."

Hooper, who's career literally reached a standstill a year after his arrival in Hollywood, is a living testament to the difficulty of maintaining a career in the horror genre. Shortly before he was approached by Kobritz for *Salem's Lot*, Hooper had even met with Italian producers over the possibility of directing *The Guyana Massacre*, before his agent blew the whistle on the project ("God bless him," Hooper now says).

Hooper openly admits that *Salem's Lot* pulled him from obscurity.

"Look," says Hooper, "this is a quantum leap for me. *Salem's Lot* is my best picture, and there's no question about it. It's a major studio production, I'm working with a fantastic cast and crew. And Kobritz is wonderful. This is a first for me."

But is it the same Tobe Hooper in *Salem's Lot* that we saw in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or even *Eaten Alive*? Can the same audacious spirit run through something created for television?

"Oh, I think so," Hooper replies. "For one thing, my style is ingrained in me. It does not change. It improves, perhaps, but it does not change. Also, *Salem's Lot* does not rely on the same kind of dynamics as *Chainsaw*. It is scary, it is atmospheric, but in a different way; I do not have to cheat the audience to bring it to television.

"The style of my films is not their violence. Violence has sometimes been an ingredient in them, but because I shoot it a certain way, people may have thought that is the style all by itself. You know, I made a number of short and feature films before I entered the genre with *Texas Chainsaw*, and they didn't contain violence, but my style was developing nonetheless in each of those films.

"Part of the idea of *Salem's Lot* is to bring the audience into the movement, in a way; the camera moves almost constantly. I am leading the audience on, but I'm satisfying them, too—I'm not cheating them. They're not going to expect a dollar's worth of scare and get 75 cents' worth of talk. And you can do that without slicing someone up with a chainsaw."

In fact, there is relatively little dialogue in *Salem's Lot*. The narrative is advanced primarily in cinematic terms through camera movement and editing, and through scenes that establish perspective in a strictly visual way. Kobritz's desire for this effect—and his need for a director who could add to his and Monash's ideas, not just carry them out—was the main impetus behind the hiring of Tobe Hooper.

One of Hooper's most striking scenes of barely glimpsed violence is the murder of Dr Bill Norton by Straker, who picks him up and heaves him across a room into a wall embedded with antlers. Hooper's camera carries the audience right along with Norton, holding on a close shot of Norton's horrorstruck face up to and including the moment of impact. Because the actual impalement is not seen in a wide shot, the scene is technically acceptable for network TV, and Hooper's surprise trick of dragging the audience along on the victim's death ride assures both shock and terror.

In another sequence, Hooper and his special effects team employ a coffin's-eye-view of the inside of a grave, to involve the audience in the resurrection of one of the Glick brothers.

in his interview, Kobritz explains the mechanics of two of *Salem's Lof's* most elaborate effects: the vampires' contact lenses and the shot-in-reverse levitation scenes. Hooper discusses their emotional quality.

"I invented those," Hooper says, "working with the make-up and special effects people. The one with the eyes has to do with hypnotism. I was going for an effect that would implicate the audience—again, I guess it's my interest in psychology—rather than have them walk out of the room for a drink when the vampire turns to hypnotize someone. Those are generally very boring, predictable scenes.

"I studied what I had been exposed to as a film student and moviegoer, from the old Universals all the way up to the Hammer films. No matter how you try to explain those away or make allowances, it's always just Chris Lee with those damned bloodshot eyes. I knew our hypnotism would have to be something that is not easy for an audience to comprehend. Well, we've all had bloodshot eyes. So what we came up with was a kind of contact lens that just glows and glows and follows you, and is obviously not an optical done in the lab, and is therefore strange and fascinating to look at.

"The result is that it makes you look in his eyes, too, and you just wonder and look and look and look."

And the levitation scene, in which the vampires float through the window to prospective victims?

"Well, I'm sorry they told you so much about that. Damn! That's the kind of thing that should also make you guess, so you're riveted to your seat. It's one of those devices that ought to be revealed after you've seen the picture. But since they've told you...

"The business of bringing the kid into the room on a boom crane eliminates the use of wires, and if you keep the camera in a certain position, keep the kid moving so you're distracted from guessing or trying to guess how the effect was done—which is unlikely anyway—and you cut properly, it's very disturbing. It's just obvious there are no wires. I also had an ectoplasmic mist surrounding him, and issuing in a kind of vacuum from him to his victim and back again."

The levitation effect was also enriched by shooting in reverse, which made the ectoplasmic fog swirl in an eerie way.

But how will all of this look on a big screen? With everyone

involved with the production stressing that *Salem's Lot* is a feature, not just a television special, it seems a logical question.

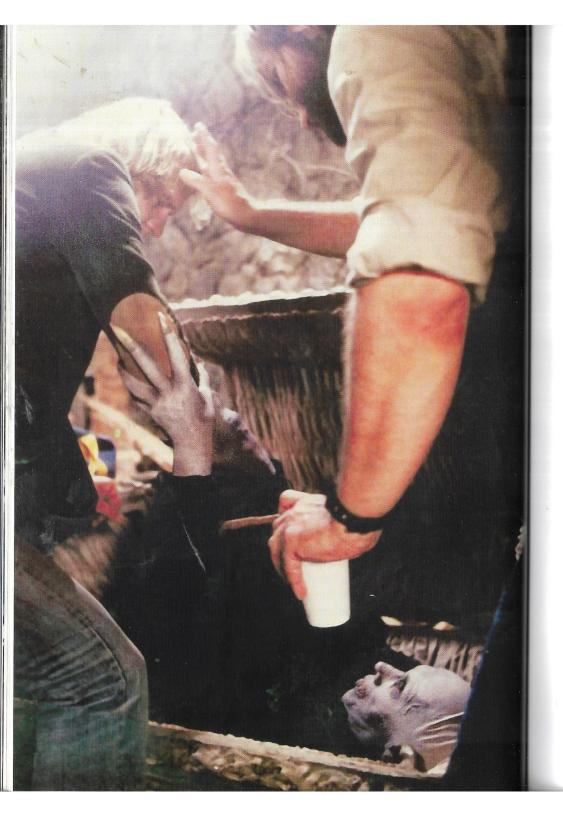
"This piece was not made with a lot of concessions to TV, beyond the obvious limiting of the use of violence," Hooper replies. "There has been some second unit shooting, about five days I think, for some of the special effects. These are physical effects, as you called them before, not opticals—there are no cheap opticals designed for the TV screen. The photography is very good, Mort Rabinowitz's art direction is just remarkable; *Salem's Lot* will look like a feature."

Salem's Lot wrapped shooting on August 29, 1979. Hooper assembled his rough cut within a couple of weeks after. CBS has already begun to promote the miniseries, and will air it on two successive nights during either the November ratings "sweep" (when network ratings are closely monitored to determine future advertising rates—and the best specials are consequently televised) or a date soon after.

And way up in Center Lovell, Maine, the author of 'Salem's Lot is awaiting the production's telecast like the rest of us.

"I thought *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was a great movie, and I like the screenplay they've come up with for this, so I'm looking forward to it," says Stephen King.

"What I'd really like them to do is send me a videotape of the European version. I'd be very into that."



The Overture of the Grave:
An Interview with Tobe Hooper
BILL KELLEY

For all his efforts to become a mainstream Hollywood filmmaker, Tobe (pronounced Tow-bee) Hooper remains an enigma. The controversy caused by *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), his second feature, created an underground cult reputation for him even before he abandoned his native Texas for California. The strange and sporadic distribution of the film, the folding of the company originally licensed to release it (after the conviction of its officers in the *Deep Throat* obscenity case), and the resultant "disappearance" of millions of dollars in rental receipts, all contributed footnotes to the bizarre history of its director. The release of Hooper's first Hollywood movie, *Eaten Alive* (which he had filmed as *Death Trap*) a year later did not make his cinematic vision more accessible to the public; even some of his staunchest defenders felt it clouded nuances that had been crystallized in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

At the time of *Texas Chainsaw*'s release, it was difficult even to ascertain Hooper's age; he was variously described as a man in his late 20s to mid-30s. Hooper now gives his age as 33. He studied cinematography and music in Texas, and made two feature-length

This article first appeared in Cinefantastique, volume 9, issue 2 (1980).

67

left Stake and coffee: Tobe Hooper directs David Soul and Reggie Nalder in this rehearsal for the death of Mr Barlow.

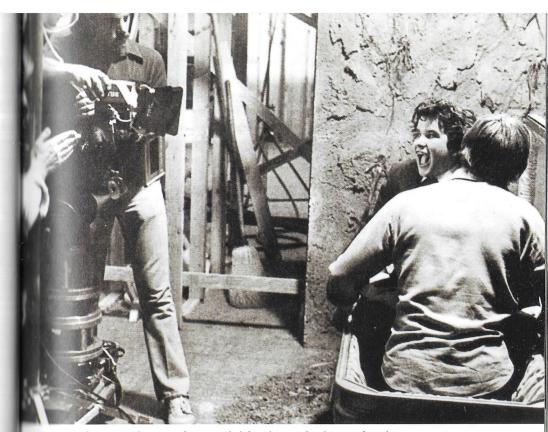
films—a PBS documentary on Peter, Paul and Mary, and a psychedelic art film called *Eggshells*—before a carefully calculated move into modern, commercial horror with *Texas Chainsaw*. Significantly, the least publicized aspect of Hooper's background—his interest in psychology—supplies perhaps the most forceful current to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

Hooper is one of several young, contemporary filmmakers—Brian De Palma and John Carpenter among them—who acknowledge a debt to Alfred Hitchcock. But Hooper realizes that Hitchcock's ability to shock is in many ways the least of his gifts; Hitchcock is one of a handful of filmmakers who, early in his career, integrated a mastery of technique with a strong story sense. However powerful De Palma and Carpenter's films may occasionally be, they have, until recently, remained essentially derivative. Hooper, on the other hand, has fused his technical skills with the deep psychological base of his films, and virtually created a new genre.

Hooper lives in Los Angeles with his 13-year-old son ("I'm divorced...I was married very young and I've been divorced about eight years"). He openly admits that producer Richard Kobritz's call for him to direct *Salem's Lot* rescued him from obscurity. Most articulate when discussing the technical side of his films, Hooper speaks slowly, with a deep, gravelly voice that projects a low-key charm. He describes his present career stage with just one sentence: "It's the second act."

You were announced to direct *The Dark* and now it's out under John Bud Cardos' signature. What happened?

It was an unpleasant and totally impossible situation. There was a conspiracy where the first assistant director [Cardos], who was a friend, had shot a picture before for these people and actually had been promised this one. But Bill Devane wanted me, and so did the associate producer [Igo Kanter], and the actual producer [Edward L. Montoro], who produced *Grizzly, The Day of the Animals*, and



Shooting a close-up of Danny Glick (Brad Savage) as he rises from his coffin to attack gravedigger Mike Ryerson (Geoffrey Lewis). The grave/coffin was a mini set constructed on the studio floor at Burbank.

had re-edited and distributed *Beyond the Door.* But this producer and I had a conflict that would occur daily. He had a vision, and I had a vision, and they clashed. I found myself not wanting to be a traffic cop...and consequently, I was not. So I shot about four days of the picture after prepping it. In four days, I had probably five major arguments. The crew had been hand selected without my consideration, and they were the assistant's crew. After a while, I saw the man [Cardos] studying the script, and then I knew what his thinking was. I was calling my agent every few minutes. The producer [Montoro] should have directed the movie. He did not confine

his interests to story planning. He interrupted something that was a very personal, very specific, well thought-out, well learned through hardship style. My vision of film is stylistic—which does not exclude commercialism. There's no reason why a commercial picture cannot also be a dynamite film. And the times we're in right now, it takes something to get those kids into the local theatre. However, it's also a matter of having, once you get them in there, a degree of credibility.

There was talk that you had and lost a Universal Pictures contract, and then you dropped from sight until now and Salem's Lot.

You may not know I had a history with Salem's Lot for four years. I had an opportunity to come and work for Warner Bros. on a yearly contract to develop something. Well, there was this book, Salem's *Lot*—and this was before Stephen King got real hot. But there was a conflict because Billy Friedkin, a friend of mine and one of my major mentors, was at Universal. I made the decision to go to Universal because of Billy. Anyway, things didn't work out at all for any of us at Universal at the time. The timing was wrong. I spent 18 months on two scripts - genre scripts - which were never filmed. They were development deals. The majors will give young, promising talent a development deal, and if it meets their expectations, or their standards, or what they had for lunch, you can acquire from them an interest. Then you're on to something else and another script. I did two scripts over an 18-month period of waiting and politicking and so forth. In the meantime, Billy left and came to Warner's. Also, Salem's Lothad come up again there. I had gone to work on a project at Universal that did not work out-for anyone; there's no bad guys connected, it just didn't work—and so the motion picture division at Warner's called me one more time, and with Stirling Silliphant producing and writing at that time. They asked if I could get Ned Tarmen at Universal to loan me out so I could come over and work with Stirling. Billy finally suggested that he produce and I direct Salem's Lot and I said "that sounds terrific." Well, before the project got moving it fell through and *Salem's Lot* went to television. That was the last I heard for a long time—until Richard Kobritz called me.

How do you feel about working in television?

Well, when *Salem's Lot* was transferred to television I remember thinking that, actually, because of the way the book is constructed as a story, television is a good format for it. It's a long story, and its fragmented, and you acquire the information that makes you respond cumulatively. And making it longer enables you to get most of the punches in. Kobritz is also a wonderful producer; Mort Rabinowitz is an incredible production designer—I'm so impressed with him it's unbelievable, and I hope he's available for everything I do. And of course there's the cast, who were so receptive and inventive.

How did you get on with James Mason? Do you think he came away feeling he'd worked with a solid director?

I do absolutely. He didn't say anything to me so much as to my mother. I brought my mother around a bit, Mason and his wife spent a little time with her, and took a liking to her. I got more information back through my mother than Mason. But he showed, when we worked, a remarkable professionalism and a creative and inventive quality that complemented what I wanted. I had a very warm relationship with all of the cast. I'm not just a technician, even though my background is cinematography, editing and music. That is now second nature to me, and my new wonder is the construction of human behavior. I was always interested in characterization, but what I'm saying is it is now a priority, because the technical aspect—my style—is already ingrained. The thing I love is working with so many talented people because they can invent and bring so much to their work. That's what I love—not just being a filmmaker, but a director. I aspire to being an actor's

director. And again, that does not diminish the technical style of the picture.

Do you still feel Hitchcock is the best?

Well, I love Hitchcock. I love his films. He inspired me as a teacher of film language. But I feel now that his strong point was his film language and not the humanity or a display of genius in terms of relationships. To break that down very simply—genius as a technician, lack of genius in performance. Even though he has used tremendous actors, it seems as though they have had to confine themselves because of the technical side of the movie. I'm trying not to work that way—although my film language may somewhat resemble Hitchcock's because I loved his movements and the way he got into points of view and discovery and timing.

Is there a sweep to the camera movements in Salem's Lot?

The camera is almost always moving. I mean, incredible booms, dolly shots, epic Atlas Apollo moon shots that sweep away very quickly from the interior of the Marsten House to show you the epic scale of the house. You won't believe your eyes. There's a staircase equal to if not larger than the one in *Gone with the Wind*—the Memphis mansion, not Tara. The staircase almost goes into infinity. But besides that, the construction of the whole interior is somewhat like *Citizen Kane*. It's so massive that you can walk into the fireplaces, it has strange things you don't expect to see at all. It's all pock-marked with oozing craters in the wall, really horrifying stuff.

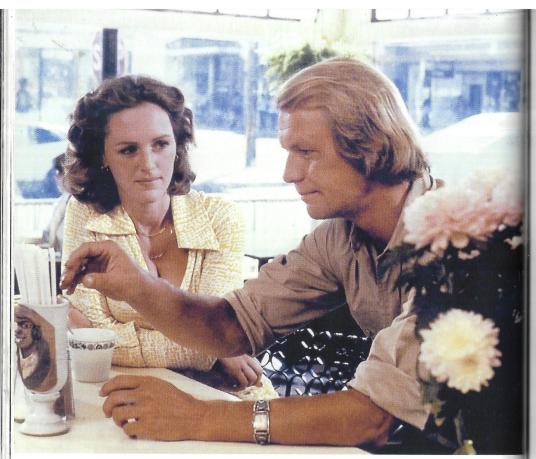
What did Mason say when he saw that?

Oh, Mason loved it. But the way I played Mason was for a contrast in what he looked like and what he did. He is immaculate, never a blemish on him, a very well-tailored man and a pleasing fellow. And inside that house of decay it's an incredible contrast, as well



The "vampire wrangler" and his bride: James Mason and wife Clarissa in his caravan during the shooting of *Salem's Lot*. Clarissa enjoys a memorable resurrection as Marjorie Glick, the loving mom who wakes up in the morgue.

as Mason—I should say Straker—enjoying himself and what he's doing. It's really a shocking bit of chemistry when you see a kindly actor, a prestigious man, carrying a black bundle wrapped in plastic through the bulkhead doors and into the cellar of the Marsten House. And very pleased, you see, almost with the expression of the cat that ate the canary, he unfolds this little dead child on the dining room table, and is quite proud of himself—you can almost see the tail feathers of the canary sticking out of his mouth. The contrast is so frightening it's wonderful. And that was just one of maybe a hundred little bits that Mason did.



Doomed love: Ben Mears and Susan Norton (David Soul and Bonnie Bedelia) enjoy the calm before the storm.

How was David Soul to work with?

I was shocked. He's not like his television series; he's quite talented—this is a new David Soul.

You seem pretty happy with Salem's Lot.

Oh, listen (laughs), there's only one like it. It's an actual epic. I say epic in the sense that it's long like *Gone with the Wind*, it has a large

cast, it looks like a multi-million dollar spectacle—which it is. It's the epic piece of its genre.

Do you see it as an updating of *Dracula* — with the character interaction and a central figure whose presence is felt even when he isn't seen?

In a sense. But it also bridges that credibility gap and takes you over from a situation that is meant to be an enchantment with the past, into the present in the return of Ben Mears—David Soul—to 'Salem's Lot. He returns but not altogether innocently.

Did you catch the similarities between the house in *Chainsaw* and the Marsten House?

Oh, of course. In a way, that was deliberate. The house occupies a space that is unique and has a magnetic power that seems to identify with the negative side of human nature. The house we built is about five times larger than the Universal backlot *Psycho* house.

Is the European theatrical of Salem's Lot more explicit?

It's a little more explicit. This piece does not stand or fall on that kind of dynamics—it doesn't need that. This film is very spooky—it suggests things and always has the overtone of the grave. It affects you differently than my other horror films. It's more soft-shelled. A television movie does not have blood or violence. It has atmosphere which creates something you cannot escape—the reminder that our time is limited and all the accoutrements that go with it, such as the visuals.

Did the combination of working with big stars for the first time and the short TV schedule present problems?

Yes, but I overcame most of them. I completed the picture in 37



days. That's like shooting two major features in one-quarter the time you'd normally take. It caused conflicts. But most of the people were willing to help. We worked long hours, we did not work eight-to-five. I mean, we really *worked*. The reason I sound so wiped out is I'm trying to recover from working two months on three hours sleep a night. I'm exhausted—but this film was very necessary for me. It is a feature. It is not by any stretch of the imagination a conventional television show. It's really packed, it's loaded, and I'm proud of it.

How many camera set-ups were you doing a day?

It's hard to say, we were working so fast. I'd say between 35 to 40.

That's like a throwback to the Roger Corman pace.

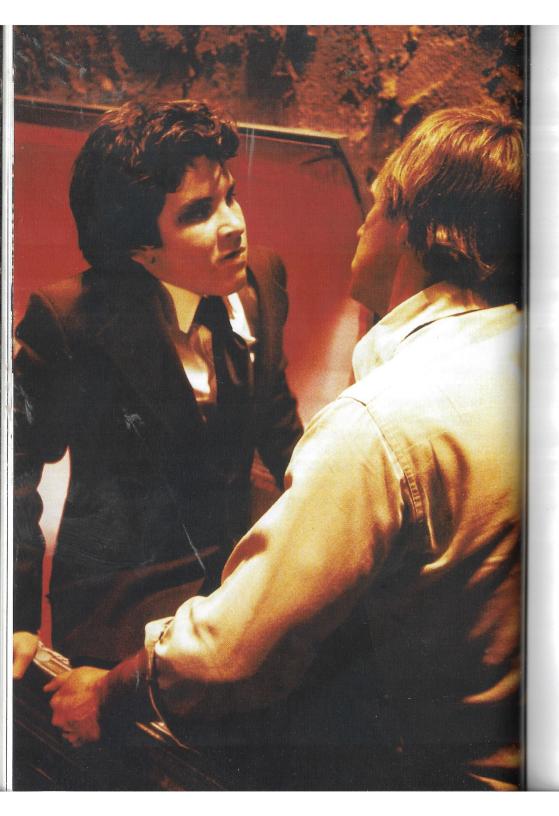
It was murder. We were tying up two stages, and we'd jump from one to the other. We also used local locations for interiors, to match exterior locations in northern California.

This is a big career jump for you — right into the mainstream. You were rescued. Your name was even mentioned in connection with a Guyana film at one point.

Oh, sure. I went to Rome to meet those guys and maybe do the Guyana piece. And God bless him, my agent, John Gaines, said "Absolutely not."

Do you have anything lined up after Salem's Lot? Are they genre?

I have three things to select from now. And they split the difference between genre and non-genre. I'm moving from the genre in an intelligent way, I think. One leap and it's risky. I love and respect the genre, and I'm delighted by its success and the respect—to a degree—that is being given to it finally. I'll never turn my back on it. What I'm interested in doing now, though, is what I indirectly suggested to you before—something with dynamic human character relationships. And of course it will still have a strong story, a suspenseful story. I do, however, want to concentrate on characterization. But don't worry—I don't think you'll find me directing a nice little parlor comedy with a group of people sitting around talking. Not unless they're discussing the destruction of the world.



Primal Fear:
An Interview with Tobe Hooper
TONY EARNSHAW

How, when and why were you invited to direct Salem's Lot?

I got a call from someone at Warner Bros. It probably came in from [producer] Richard Kobritz's office. I went in for a meeting, I gave them a vision and Kobritz and I were totally supportive of the way I saw it. It was about a three-day decision to make and I was hanging out at Musso Frank's by the telephone booth—a lot of business was going on—and was then told "Come in and let's go to work."

Kobritz was complimentary about you. Was he the perfect collaborator?

Well, hearing that makes sense because Kobritz was one of the very few producers that I've worked with or worked for that was totally behind me. He gave me free rein so long as I came in on schedule. Which I did. I have nothing but the highest regard for Richard Kobritz.

This interview was conducted in August 2012 exclusively for this book.

79

left Danny Glick (Brad Savage) rises from the grave to vampirize Mike Ryerson (Geoffrey Lewis). The sequence was filmed in a speciallycreated box set in the Warner Bros. studios at Burbank. What was the attraction of the project for you?

Well, I had read the King novel and it went through several changes. When I first came to Los Angeles, I had a choice of going with Warner Bros or Universal under Bill Friedkin. I went with Universal because of Bill-Friedkin was my mentor. Then after Sorcerer there were a lot of changes everywhere within the studio system and then it came up again. As I remember Bill was going to try and get it off the ground at Warners as a feature - that I would do - and I believe that the only name I heard was that Ben Mears would be [played by] Jon Voight. That went away. It was impossible to do the entire Salem's Lot as a two-hour feature-length format. I always saw it as Peyton Place that was drawing some kind of bad energy, in particular from the Marsten House. Some kind of negative monolith or something in that particular area. The real appeal to me was the length of it. By now I was going into television because it was apparent that it has to be a long film to tell all of those stories because all of those stories and personalities were kind of ascending. You know how some trees, when it's raining, their leaves will turn upside down? There was this foreboding sense in the characters that played a most important part in the film: their reactions, their response to what's happening in their lives and then here comes the antique shop soon to be followed by Barlow's arrival. Those details in the characters, the relationships, the town and the drama really inspired me. I wish I could have done Ben Mears as a child...

As a flashback?

No, no. As I recall King's novel actually has Ben Mears going to the Marsten House and thinking he's seen Hubie Marsten hanging by the neck. Then Mears goes away and comes back. However David Soul did it just excellent. I can't recount that story with the teacher, Lew Ayres, but a film can only be so long. With a four-hour miniseries I was able to capture the feeling of the town and also edit some of these pauses. That was Salem's Lot. Then there was Jerusalem's Lot.

Not attached but I heard that George Romero had passed on it. I don't know why. I don't know if it was a Los Angeles thing. I don't know if he was working. I know George but he and I haven't had a conversation about it. I was surprised to see that Larry Cohen was involved, who's a dear friend of mine and strangely we have never had a conversation about it.

I understand Larry either produced a screenplay or wanted to. In between that the project moved from a movie to a TV project and when it shifted to Kobritz's control it became a miniseries and Larry's screenplay wasn't appropriate.

I'm not sure. I know Larry did Return to Salem's Lot.

Had you read the book prior to being offered the project? Obviously you had. Is it a requirement to read the book or can that muddy the water? Are you able to separate the two?

Idon't think I was able to separate the two. I stayed as true to King's novel [as possible] as a template for the whole thing. The novel scared the hell out of me. I loved everything about it. I didn't try to make it better; I didn't try to inject something that was outside the spirit of King's novel.

There were significant changes made such as the character of Barlow. Kobritz said he wanted something that was animalistic, beastlike, feral. He didn't want a creature that could communicate with its victims. He wanted something ancient and horrible. How did you feel that fitted, and how it deviated from Stephen's book?

Ididn't want a ham vampire or a non-scary vampire. I wanted him to be a monster. I think a couple of years before that, when Kinski did it, it was like no other vampire that I'd ever seen. I wanted the thing to be monstrous. Kobritz and I really saw eye-to-eye on practically everything. I remembered that picture of Kinski/Nosferatu/Max Schreck...it really should not be human like vampires today which are beautiful. I wanted him to draw attention—for you to be afraid to look at him.

Another scene that didn't appear was the one where a woman nurses her vampire baby. Stephen King said that was probably due to the restrictions of television. Were there certain things you couldn't show on American TV at the time and was that one of them? Does that ring a bell with you?

Not in particular. But Standards & Practice was quite strict with the network. Remember the character that Fred Willard played. In the novel the George Dzundza character put the shotgun into his mouth. Standards & Practice said "You can put the shotgun three feet in front of his head" so I went out there with a yardstick to show that it was three feet. There was additional money for a foreign feature so I shot it both ways—one with the shotgun in his mouth, one with it three feet away from his face. There was additional money to shoot some scenes twice.

What were the other scenes?

One was the conversation about the dead with their eyes open. It's okay if the undead have their eyes open but the dead-dead don't, and never can.

How big an opportunity did it represent for you? Was it huge?

Oh yes, of course. Loving cinema the way I do I saw it as something cinematically that I could do that would elevate the miniseries look and just in the grammar of the bing-bang-bong—no wide shot over and over.

Richard Kobritz wanted people to feel that they were working on



"Don't move, Larry! Don't move!" Cully Sawyer's revenge on his philandering wife and her lover (Fred Willard as realtor Larry Crockett) caused problems with the censor. The scene shows Larry holding the shotgun before his face; an alternative version featured him placing the barrels *in* his mouth.

a movie, not a TV show. He wasn't being pejorative about TV but he was drawing the distinction between one and the other. Did you buy into that, too?

Absolutely, I treated it like a movie. And with Richard's blessing, it worked.

How close did the two of you become?

We had dinner together on location in Ferndale. We were pals. Everything that I wanted to do to push things, to make things feature-like, he was totally behind and supported me with the main office. Occasionally the main office would send a note down saying "Tell that guy to move faster, to get on with the dialogue bullshit and get to what's really important." Richard supported that. I think that if the dialogue bullshit doesn't work, it doesn't work.

Was there a benefit to you being so far from Los Angeles? Northern California seems to have been a very different mindset from Los Angeles.

For one thing it was really cool in Ferndale. We probably didn't have the budget to go to the east coast to shoot it [in Maine]. I'm not sure about any budgetary things but I do know that at the time it was one of the highest budgeted miniseries. It was just more convenient to try to find something that looked like a New England town in California and Ferndale really did. On night shooting there the sound man could hear the mist hitting the microphone. We called it the Humboldt fever. That now would have a different connotation. It was the fog that actually had weight to it like somewhere between rain and fog. It was a total pleasure to shoot exteriors there.

Did Stephen King have any involvement with the production? Did you meet with him, collaborate with him, did he visit the set?

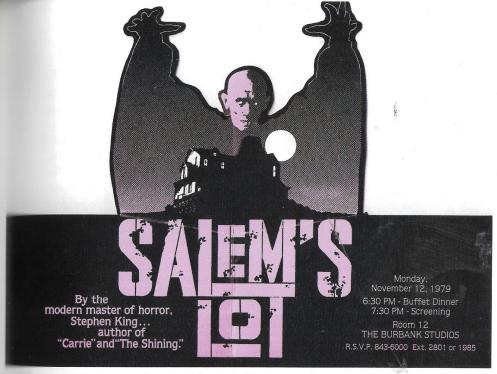
He visited the set before shooting started. That was the first time I met Stephen King. He came down to Warner Bros and we met in Kobritz's office. Ever since King and I have been friends.

Did he have any observations on the production?

I don't recall. What I recall is just a "hello" meeting. Stephen told me stories about what happened when he saw *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, like walking home from the theatre at night after having seen it. I felt his confidence.

Obviously you don't want it to go the other way. You don't want acrimony.

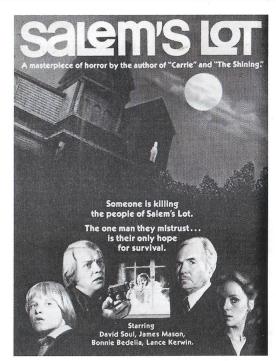
No, no. And there wouldn't have been, nor could there have been, because of my special love for his work.



An invitation not to be missed: for the buffet dinner and screening of *Salem's Lot* on November 12, 1979.

David Soul spoke of your diligence, storyboarding, etc. Is that how you like to work or was *Salem's Lot* different due to its size and its scale?

I didn't actually storyboard it. What I did was on each page and on separate pages inserted into my script was like a blueprint of little arrows, dot-dots and asterixes where the characters would go. Then I would have A-B-C-D of camera set-ups. Then the type of lens. On the other side of that I would have the millimetre of lens. Back then I knew the language of cinema really well having done previous to that some 60 TV commercials and likewise 60 or 70 documentaries. And then *Eggshells*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. I grew up in a movie theatre so I really couldn't tell the difference



A typical newspaper ad for what producer Richard Kobritz hoped would be a benchmark in televisual horror.

between cinema and reality. I would know when it was the right time to dolly in and dolly out. I tried to break those conventions down a little bit.

Did your extensive experience on documentaries give you a good grounding for what you were doing at Warner Bros?

Well, it did. The experience of some of my documentaries—most of them I was the DP on—[meant] I had that down. I had my own system of doing that. The thing that intrigued me about characters and behavior was that the behavior would be synchronized with the experience the characters were going through. In this genre that's the thing I believe. I'm convinced it's as true as of today: the fear factor comes from the identification with the characters' fears.

If that's right then the moment and the magnitude of what they're getting ready to experience, you're in sync with it. It's an emotional exchange with the characters.

That sense of creeping evil. Was it easier to deliver that sense of atmosphere with a longer running time or was it harder due to what couldn't be shown on TV?

What couldn't be shown on TV...I had no other choice but to accept that. And being a realist I did that and I found a way to get myself out of a painted corner. I love being painted into a corner because whatever solution you have invariably will end up being better. If you can pull that off.

Do you believe in the concept of "less is more"?

Absolutely I do. We can all imagine much more than the actual showing of it. That's a long-running belief and I've found it to be true. Going back to *Chainsaw*, that was thought of as being the bloodiest film ever made and it wasn't. When the girl is on the meat hook and it pans down the body to a wash tub that was meant to catch the blood, people actually thought they saw blood. If you engage an audience as the characters interact with them—and this requires some thinking on behalf of the audience—the involvement comes with "How do I solve this puzzle, this problem, this conundrum?" Once they're involved on that level, they are with you and they are seeing more than you can show them.

One of your cast members recalled that you drank a lot of Coca-Cola on the set and were "pretty wired" but that you knew what you wanted to see on screen and how to put it there. Is that true — was that down to stress or just staying awake?

It was actually Dr Pepper. I drank it since I was a child—a lot of sugar and I expect I drank two dozen a day. Oh yeah! Not anymore but I

came from Austin, Texas and Dr Pepper started in Waco, Texas. The sugar certainly helped and I believe I was smoking these little cheroots. I chain-smoked that nicotine and drank those Dr Peppers. It wasn't stress. I found out early that tobacco would keep you awake when I would drive over the weekend between Austin and Dallas. Fortunately you could even smoke on the sound stages back then. I don't know how to express it; this was probably the best time of my life. It truly was. I was getting to play with the ultimate toy. I was able to express my feelings and have actors listen to me, respond to me, understand me. And I would usually take them aside. I would work with them personally, on the side, so the actors they were playing with wouldn't know what I'd said. I did that with everyone.

The same actor described you as "unobtrusive." In other words, you trusted your cast to get on and deliver. Is that fair and accurate?

The behavior was appropriate to the situation. Since I didn't group direct there may have been that illusion. The most fun I ever had in my life was, for the first time, being able to work with that many established actors and to find out what makes them tick. I learned a great deal from them and at the same time they were very generous and understanding to what I was trying to do.

How much of the film was cast by you? Did you enjoy carte blanche to hire who you wanted or were you limited by budgets, etc? Did you work closely with Richard Kobritz over casting?

Richard and I were so in sync that the actors would come in, we'd both look at them, both hear the readings and then we would have very long conversations about the why and why not. I didn't think about the budget of the actors but I accepted what the casting department was doing. It was a lot of give and take but at the end of the day Richard always—always—supported me. Someone like that is a very, very special person.

David was incredible. David and I were friends, and still are. I haven't talked to David since I don't know when but when the film was finished David and I were friends for many years. We hung out together. I know he would not want me to mention Starsky & Hutch but with his fame we used to drive rather fast through Beverly Hills and some tickets were involved. But David was incredible. David, it seems, felt that he was typecast by Starsky & Hutch and wanted something more, even down to asking me if he could wear glasses occasionally in the film and I said "Absolutely." I would have to walk him from his trailer to his set to keep the fans away. He was that famous. It was amazingly popular, that particular show, and he wanted to be something else other than that character from that TV show.

How big an escape plan did Salem's Lot represent for him?

In my memory he totally loved it. He was a total professional and extraordinarily good.

A lot of people on the production couldn't quite believe that James Mason was doing it. He represented old school English professionalism. He seemed to epitomize class.

He and I also became good friends up to his departure in life. He had a little bit of that character in him. [It was something] I don't think he had done before and I think it was kind of a naughty pleasure in a way. A particular scene. He's in the car driving from the Marsten House down to the antiques shop. The cameraman was in the passenger side and I was in the back seat. He pulled into the parking lot of the antiques shop and the rear tire of the Cadillac he was driving hit the curb and the camera went bump-bump. He said "Tobe, we can do it again but you can save that shot if you cut an insert of the tire running over a baby's head." He loved it, I loved working with him, he loved working with me. He came up

with a lot of really good ideas, like reaching for the banister [in the Marsten House] right before his character expires after David Soul emptied six blanks into him. I don't think anyone else would take in these days or time. He suggested the shot of shooting through the banisters to his hands coming up and I said, "James, if I had the time, I would do it. I only have so much time." He became a dear friend. Losing him was very traumatic for me.

He was born in Huddersfield, which is where I'm calling you from. He's a home-town boy.

Is that right? If I start to cry now, you'll understand.

Bonnie Bedelia.

Bonnie came in later in the casting. She was kind of fragile; at least that's my memory. I think she was perfect for the part. We had seen quite a few people from Kim Basinger to Angel Tompkins. There were so many because the casting had to be complementary to everyone else. Bonnie delivered the goods. She totally amazed me. I do recall she felt she was shooting a European film.

Was that as a result of your direction?

Yes, and watching pieces of the rough cut for ADR. It definitely reminded her of something European and not Hollywood. She was totally easy to work with, to take direction and embellish the role.

She's the one that pays the ultimate price and sums up what's happening in the town, especially in the epilogue sequence. Deep down we all want to play a vampire. How did she react to that?

Vampires at that particular time had not been morphed into something else. I know she loved that last scene. The costume

90

James Mason as Richard Straker, the self-styled "vampire wrangler," delivering a snack for his master...

department came up with some of Jean Harlow's [attire]—that white dress—from some Jean Harlow film. I think there's magic in everything—either cool or bad or whatever. Everyone was a part of the family in this particular war dance. If you're working hard enough and everyone is involved enough then some kind of community spirit comes up and that's so important to make a film. It truly penetrates this group of hundreds of people. At a certain point a film starts making a demand on itself for what must be done.

It sounds like you tried to engender that magic all the way through it.

Yeah, it was the high point of my life. All of the conceptual work that I'd thought about or studied that had to do with the cinema and cinema directors I was able to use. The director should be more than just camera angles. In that fashion I was a cast member.

Lance Kerwin.

Lance was really a cool kid. I don't think he came in for a reading. I think he had a show on the air, *James at 16*, so it was almost like Lance was the only logical choice. I don't remember how old Lance was—I think he was 16—but he had done a good job with what he was doing on his show. He was a good actor.

What did he need to bring to the character to provide that balance with David Soul?

There was a conflict with his family—with his father and mother—about his interests and what he would be able to do in his life. He was interested in fantasy and in the unknown and things that I certainly identified with—the same kinds of interests that I had when I was a teenager. I wanted to be a professional magician as a kid. Once Kerwin's interaction with the family was established: his interest in directing the school play, things that mirrored Ben

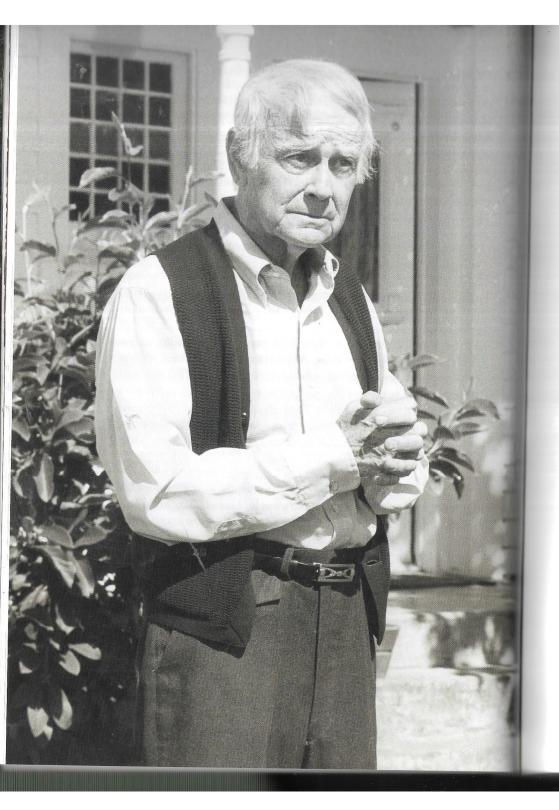
Mears when Ben was a child in 'Salem's Lot...that's what I was truly interested in. I knew he could handle proper behavior when it came to going to the Marsten House and being involved in pushing that 2,000 lb coffin out of the root cellar. I thought he did quite well. That was probably the most difficult scene with Lance. And for myself something that was extraordinarily simple and would seem very easy and that was directing his direction of the high school play because you had to go back a long way to do that—to make it seem like it's really a high school play. That was a jump and worked out quite well. It just took a little thinking about. It was seemingly insignificant but yet that play told the history of Jerusalem's Lot and where it stood in the history of that part of the world.

How much were you either consciously or unconsciously channelling your own youth through Lance's character?

Probably more so than I know. Oh yeah, I would think so. It may have been conscious, it may have been unconscious but it was me. And I think it was Stephen King. At that time a few hundred, maybe a thousand young people had gone through that kind of fascination, interest or curiosity.

There is a crucial balance between Soul and Kerwin: father/son, buddy-buddy, brothers. David becomes Lance's saviour and viceversa.

It was there for people if they read the script and comprehended and read the novel that it was like a cycle. David/Ben Mears understood that because he had been there. He had been a writer and had moved away and had come back. The first scene I shot with the two of them was Lance Kerwin, David Soul and Ed Flanders going up the steps to go into the Marsten House and Lance comes running out. Their first connection in the shooting of the film was a real connection and that is that Lance ran right into—shouldered into—David's eye. It put a goose egg on it on about the third or



fourth day of production that we had to lance, no pun intended. We had to drain the blood out of there so we wouldn't lose a day of production. David looked great the next day. Little nuances like that, reality, happy accidents helped connect the two characters. They were buddies throughout the shooting. It was interesting.

What are your memories of Lew Ayres?

Lew and I first of all didn't get along that well. Lew was a metaphysical thinker and we would have long talks. I would say "Yeah, that's what you do in this one because it makes it real." Lew would say "Yeah but is it real? This is fiction. This is a comic book." And I would say "No, no. It's more than that." That was the beginning of the relationship. Then I more or less started talking about All Quiet on the Western Front that had the kind of insanity in it-I saw the film late; I'd made The Texas Chainsaw Massacre first-and All Quiet on the Western Front has characters in it that are going absolutely nuts. They're stomping around and irrational. The more we talked $about \, that \, the \, more \, Lew \, understood \, me \, and \, the \, more \, I \, understood \,$ him. I did learn something from Lew because Lew came from early cinema. He wanted to be talked through everything. I think [in one scene | he's looking through a magnifying glass and he wanted me to tell him when to put the glass down, when to stand up, when to do this and that. That's when I truly appreciated the silent movie style of directing. From that point on I talk all over the soundtrack so I can ADR it. It's something all directors do. It was just the demands and needs of a man that had a great deal of experience in the history of cinema shared with me-possibly harshly, I don't quite remember-but I thank him for that. The relationship between Lew Ayres and myself was probably one of the most learning moments in my career, really. At the end of it all Lew was fantastic. I was so lucky to get Lew Ayres.

He had been a big star. Did he therefore demand a degree of personal interaction from you that perhaps the other cast members didn't?

er

95

Lew Ayres had been a huge star in the 1930s. Forty years later he demanded similar courtesy from Tobe Hooper. After an initially awkward start the two men - veteran and young Turk became fast friends. Truly, he did. In fact there was a scene when he told me to get in his costume and do it myself. I twigged that and I knew he was an icon. I was also surrounded by icons in the cast. I treated him with that kind of respect. He needed it and, you know, he deserved it.

What are your memories of working with Geoffrey Lewis?

Geoffrey Lewis is incredible. Not to mention the inventive things that he brought to it, like appearing to rise up out of the rocking chair and float taller than he really is. That's a trick he taught me. I was looking through the camera and said "How the hell did you do it?" That's one of those David Blaine levitation things where he can stand up and then levitate from his toes to his heel. His body motion was incredible. His eyes glowed. Geoffrey is a good friend of mine and he has rather large eyeballs. The contact lenses had this front surface projection material around the iris. One of my problems as a director was how in the hell you fixate on penetrating eyes as in Stephen King's novel. How do you draw attention to the eyes? Then I started working on that and I remembered this SP material that kicks back 90% of the light. So the vampires had contacts that had a little circle around the cornea. I would have a 100 watt light bulb right by the camera magazine that would kick back 90 per cent of the light. If you're right on with it, if you use glass at a 90 degree angle and kick light through that it would have been too much, too bright. It would have looked like Village of the Damned. But this was just right. Geoff Lewis was incredible in that.

He was the only actor to attempt an authentic Maine accent.

Yeah, yeah. It wasn't too much of a conflict with the other performers who weren't doing it but I thought "What the hell?" The guy was old generation in that graveyard taking care of it. He offered it and I said "Yeah, let's go for it."

How was Ed Flanders to work with?



Tobe Hooper (second left) directs Ed Flanders, Lance Kerwin and David Soul on the steps of the Marsten House on location in Ferndale, northern California.

Ed Flanders I shot one day towards the end of production [and we did] twelve pages in one day. He understood the doctor, the doctor's approach to it and in particular Ed and David were incredible. Coming from Marjorie Glick's funeral parlor sequence where they press the two tongue depressors down in the fashion of a cross. What was going through Ed's mind, you could see.

It was the rational man having to deal with something extraordinary.

Yeah. He brought all the education of that character, all of the

knowledge into trying to make this work in his mind. That's what the audience should be doing to make it credible: send over the vampire, let's accept it and not question it. But to show that this was really happening. That one scene in my mind of Ed and David in the car really sold the credibility that this could happen.

Reggie Nalder had the best make-up and his impact on screen is unforgettable. Mr Barlow doesn't have a lot to say but he says it well. Reggie was the personification of evil and he still scares the hell out of people like me.

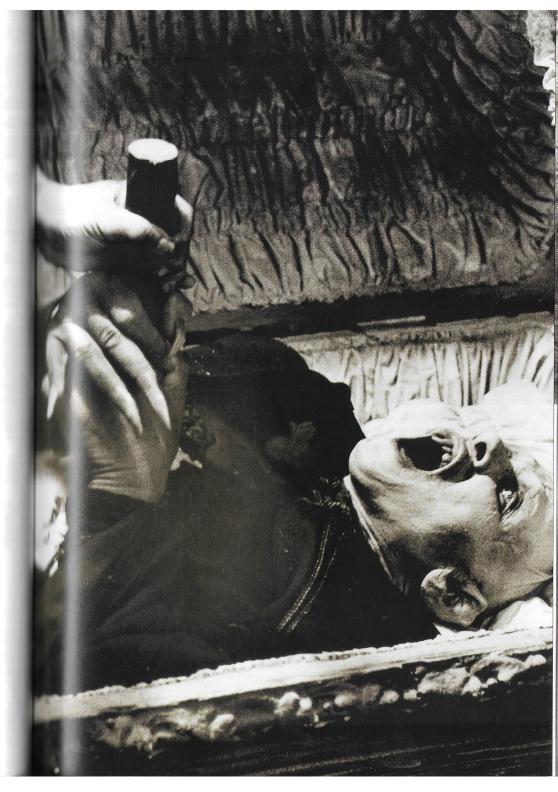
Yeah, I know. There's no question that we had to get Reggie. That wasn't even a part up for discussion. It was, "Look, let's try to find Reggie. Let's get him." Even without make-up Reggie was frightening. However in real life he was a very shy man. When David Soul was giving him the spike it scared the hell out of Reggie and David was constantly having to reassure him that he'd be all right. God bless him, he was not the way he appeared. I guess the biggest problem he had was keeping the nails glued on! But he was so accommodating. And terrifying.

Did he buy into the concept and understand what it was that he had to deliver?

Yes, he did. He would have done that anyway, I think. Reggie was always cast as a bad guy from *The Man Who Knew Too Much* onwards. Reggie really had nothing to say other than to behave. He found it, he had it and with the make-up that was Barlow. That's the character that he was.

He had no dialogue but the way he moved suggested an element of mime. Was that something you were aware of or encouraged, or something he did?

I encouraged it. One thing that I recall was encouraging it and



adjusting it so those movements would not be a cliché. It had to be an extrapolation of what he was doing, something new instead of something that you'd seen.

How well did the cast interact? David Soul admits to being in awe of James Mason. There was also very good chemistry between David and Bonnie. How much of that was forged by you?

We were such a happy family doing something that had really not been done before in that way. We all considered it a feature. I was in there silently doing my busy bee work from one actor to the other. It goes back to that collective spirit that I spoke of earlier. We were all very happy. There were things that blew me away like re-casting Elisha Cook with Marie Windsor from The Killing. They were happy to see one another again. Marie was incredible. Cookie... it was hard to locate him. That was a blind hire for both of them. I think we found him in Long Beach in a bait shop selling bait for the fishermen. Cookie was quite a trip. The very day before shooting Cookie called me in my room and started talking about one line that he had to do on the first day of shooting. He kept me on the phone about an hour or two. Then I said "Man, I have to go to bed. We're shooting in a few hours." Then after that he took it as if I was angry with him and every time he saw me from then on he'd say "Oh God, I'm getting fired." I'd say, "No, you're not being fired." The next day it'd be the same thing. He never did anything the same way twice and that was just a total blessing. The scene with Kenneth McMillan, the constable, I said "Watch him. He won't do it twice. That's what he does so just watch him. Every time he does it, it's magic, regardless." And it certainly was. Kenneth McMillan was incredible too, Marie Windsor was incredible.

How and why did you choose Ferndale to play *Salem's Lot?* Did you go out on a recce or did the studio present the location to you?

The locations department said "You should go check out Ferndale



Hero and villain: a posed shot of David Soul and James Mason outside the real-life building in Ferndale used as the Barlow & Straker antiques store.

because it looks like a New England village." So we all went up there and took a look and surely it did. It didn't look like California. It looked more like New England than California. Mort Rabinowitz was the production designer and he built the Marsten House. It was a total build. It was a huge house. The stone wall that leads up to the house was something like 50 or 60 feet. The reason is that it was the perfect vantage point on top of this hill that looked back on Ferndale so you could see the church steeples and the little village almost like in a painting. So Mort built this four-sided façade around a house. There was actually a house with a family living in it inside the walls of this house. I don't think I ever saw them come

in or come out but I knew there was a house inside there with a family and a family life going on. Once [the actors] go into the house then we're back in Warner Bros. on the sound stage. The children floating, that was another thing that people love from the film. All of those were choreographed backwards. Also the Glick boy who bites Geoffrey Lewis, that's choreographed backwards because the young actor [Brad Savage] could lie down faster than he could sit up. So there were a lot of camera tricks.

Were the people of Ferndale welcoming, and were they aware of the content of the story you were filming?

You know, I don't know. We had no interference that I knew of except that I couldn't really set fire to the house on the hill because the ground was mostly mulch. I found out that if you set a fire up there embers could go down into the mulch and weave their way through and pop up as a forest fire as much as two years later. So I used flame bards there. Inside the house those people were able to make a deal at the end of shooting that they could have all the lumber [when it came to] taking the house down. I think they made quite a lot of money on the deconstruction of the Marsten House. But back to the point. Ferndale really looked like an East Coast town. I don't think anyone questioned it.

So in transforming an ordinary home into the Marsten House it was simply a case of creating an artificial frontage.

It was entirely a build. Rabinowitz had come from *They Shoot Horses*, *Don't They*? He had either won the Academy Award or was nominated. I was able to select from the best. Rabinowitz went with me then to do *Funhouse*. He was a great production designer.

What kind of a shared vision did you have for the interior of the Marsten House, specifically the moist and rotting staircase, and the cellar? You can almost smell the dankness of that building.

The walls oozed with this strange, slick kind of pus—this viscous, effluvia nastiness. Rabinowitz was able to find a product that created a kind of slime inside. The dominant color was mould green. The very opening of the house had this staircase that was kind of like [that in] *Gone with the Wind*. It goes up to these illuminated windows and you can either go left or right. So green was the color and slime oozed from the walls. It was just as dank and unsanitary-looking as we could possibly make it.

Did you have any input on Mort Rabinowitz's designs? How much did you work together?

Very closely. I had a sketch of kind of what I wanted Barlow's coffin to look like. I wanted it to be unreal, heavy, bigger than life—like in *Oliver Twist* or *Great Expectations* for the shape of the coffins. It symbolised death visually. Any time you can set something in the tone of the universal fear, which is the end of life then those things amplify fear. It goes back to the graveyards and Frankenstein, all of that. Every time you see a graveyard you're hit in the eyes with a splash of color and morbidity and mood and fear that stays there.

Bonnie Bedelia talked of making a film with a European dynamic. Barlow is an evil from ancient Europe and the coffin seems to personify that, doesn't it?

It does. Rabinowitz put extra detailing on the coffin. You have to look at it and comprehend it because it isn't wooden, it's something else. There are a lot of strange lines in it, strange trimming that is very funereal, and it was really heavy. When they pushed it out of the root cellar the damn thing was really heavy.

Can we discuss the creation of setpiece scenes? The one that everyone talks about is the boy floating and scratching at the window. I was 13 when I watched the film on TV in England. I'm now 46 and I have never gotten over that sequence. It scared me then and it scares me now. There's something very primal about it. How was that sequence created and shot?

That was the scene that the studio said "You can't do. We don't know how to do it technically." But I did. All of that was choreographed backward. When Lance Kerwin takes the cross out of the little Dracula model that he has, he pulled the cross away from the window and put it back in the model. The boys were attached to a body cast made for them. Protruding from their back was a pipe or construction tubing that was about twelve feet long. My challenge was how to do the magic trick of getting them through the window with no wires. So he was floating with this light scaffolding tubing [emerging] from behind and about twelve feet beyond that were quite large black velvet curtains. There was a slit in the middle where the piping connected to a stage crane so they could lift him up and down. Then there was piping that was blowing mold smoke from a Mole-Richardson smoker through the plastic tubing that was connected into his costume and into his back so that the smoke was coming in backward. Of course his body hid the rig that was behind him. You couldn't see the stage crane because it was behind the very large black velvet curtains. Mold smoke was put outside to hide the curtain. When the Glick boy comes in to get his brother...that was all shot backwards. It was all choreographed backwards. You'd know something's weird and wrong but there's so much going on that you just wouldn't comprehend how the cinematic illusion had been created.

How did Ronnie Scribner and Brad Savage react to doing it?

They were good. I think they had fun doing it. It was like a funfair ride. They really got the backward choreography. It was incredible because it does look real, especially when Ralphie Glick bites Danny. They sold it really well: opening the mouth, rearing his head back as though he would and then the stage crane lifted him about a foot-and-a-half. It took a little time to shoot and the dailies... When they saw them at Warner Bros and the network, I heard that there were a lot of people would take a lunch break in the screening room and watch the dailies. I had fun with those scenes. There was something in the novel and it had to be done. Just so creepy.



The other one everybody remembers is Mike Ryerson in the rocking chair and that chilling line "Look at me, teacher!" What do you recall of shooting the two-hander between Geoffrey Lewis and Lew Ayres?

Lew by then was so into it. Pulling off this mystical connection between them. You finally see Lew falls under the spell. In the creaking of the rocking chair and Geoffrey saying "Look at me, teacher!" Then Lew started rocking like a rocking chair. He starts going back and forth, back and forth. By then you know that Jason is in his control. Even though he does disinvite him and then has a heart attack I just felt that the relationship of the rocking would add a dimension to that. They were both in sync. It wasn't like something standing there accepting it. I think he felt that at that point psychologically he was under the control of the vampire.

There's all the preamble too: noises upstairs, footsteps, him walking down the corridor, and we as the audience are willing him not to open the door because we don't want him to enter that room. When I watched it on British TV as a teenager I was wholly unprepared for the impact of what happened next, which is a triumph for you.

A lot of that comes, thankfully, from the ability to do *Peyton Place* as some kind of bad model—some kind of negative something that is obviously under the Marsten House and is drawing evil to the town. People start behaving in strange ways even before Straker gets there. The nature of the set and the location...it is definitely spooky old haunted house-looking. I think it's all of the relationships and all of the behavior and the synchronisation of the behavior in its context that makes you feel what you feel. You must go with the characters, you know? They must be in the right place in the situation and so that's why I spent a lot of time on the dialogue.

To set that balance.

Yeah. If they're right and all of that's right [then] it's going to be right. And then ghosts and gremlins from our imagination come sweeping in and fill in the gaps much better than trying to show one vision of it. If the behavior is right on you have 10,000 points of view. If you force that you have one point of view. So it was the characters' experience in a way that you would react.

Another sequence that is tremendously realized is the scene of Marjorie Glick waking up in the mortuary and the reaction of Ben Mears. What I recall most is him desperately trying to remember the 23rd psalm and he can't quite do it because he's so frightened. The tenor of his voice is rising all the time because he's terrified out of his wits. What memories do you have of choreographing and shooting that?



Ben Mears is looking at the clock. We know something is going wrong. I believe she had been in the funeral home not too many hours. We know as the audience that something is going to happen. I cut to the clock on the wall a couple of times. Then there's Ben's point of view of Marjorie Glick and at first there's nothing but a body under a sheet on the morgue's embalming table. He senses that it's going to happen. I then hold on Ben and on the point of view of Marjorie Glick. Maybe a couple of shots of the clock. And then you see a little bit of movement under the sheet. That's when he gets more hyper. David Soul understood that. By that time in shooting we were out of Ferndale [and] back at Warner Bros, deep into the story. David actually was restraining himself from being more afraid than what you see. He has that range in him. Then we found the right range for him in response to that. The choreography

of it was relatively simple. It was the way David behaved, how he could not remember what he was saying and quickly trying to make a cross out of the tongue depressors. Then Marjorie Glick moves a little more and finally her hand shoots out from under the sheet. There's this very strange curl. It was James's wife, Clarissa. I don't know how she understood completely what she was supposed to do. I know with Geoffrey – and I think I applied this throughout – that the [vampires'] behavior was rather cat-like. I know Geoffrey in the rocking chair, he's hissing and kind of moving cat-like. She did too when she swings up off the embalming table. Ben comes in and says "Don't go near her," something like that, and she actually comes forward. I'm recounting this, not really answering your question. Ben was in a chair, he gets up, Bill comes in then she gets up and comes forward and more or less connects with the cross. There is tubing that emits this smoke when she makes contact with it. That's a costume then the appliance—the burn mark—is put on her head, she backs away and then these rolling tables that the embalmer uses to put organs in and such, she vanishes and wires pull those things. They all collapse in and tumble in around her. There were very few shots in that scene. I then dolly around to include Bill coming in the door, a couple of singles on them both, and Ben Mears reacting to Marjorie. There is a three-shot-a wide shot-I recall. The staging was: she gets off the table, shooting across David Soul to Flanders. I think it had great impact. I don't recall it being that complex a blocking. There is one thing I did that sets you in the tone-that gives you the proper tone of the scene-and that is the sequence starts out in the coffin display room of the funeral home and it's dialing towards the door. You go past a couple of caskets that are open. There's always something creepy [about that]. It's more than creepy; it's the identification again with the dead. This is the end of time for the individual.

There is a little moment that hints at the decay that Barlow has brought with him, and it's when Bill slashes the woman's arm with a scalpel and the flesh is yellow.



He does, that's right. It was a prosthetic. There is something about the color yellow—grey skin and yellow interior. Foul.

What did you have to do to deliver the death of the doctor? Kobritz said you couldn't show antlers penetrating the skin when Straker skewers him.

That's right. Mason walks straight out, picks him up and then takes him off stage. He picks him up by the shoulders. It then cuts. There were two versions: the version for the cinema which was a little more active. I think you see the body being rushed up toward the antlers. In the theatrical version he wriggled and fought a little hanging on the antlers before he dies. I do recall that being a Standards & Practice thing.

In terms of what you could and couldn't show? Yeah.

Is it true that for TV you couldn't show the point of impact but you could show the aftermath? For the theatrical version you could actually see his body being pushed onto the spikes.

Right. Yeah, that's correct.

Another effective sequence is the crate in the back of Cully's truck, immediately followed by the scene in the basement of the Marsten House where they fail to padlock it, thus allowing Barlow to escape earlier than Straker had planned. What do you recall of that?

Once you see an establishing shot of the truck going by then we were on the stage rocking the truck. I did shoot that over and over again to get the proper anxiety from the actors. Of course there was someone behind the crate pushing it forward. But it was selling the cold that sold the whole sequence. The colder they got the more you believed they were cold, the more you believed that this was something totally supernatural. It was just a creepy scene, that's all, totally creepy because by then you had enough information. Your mind had gone through processing so many weird, bizarre and even esoteric happenings that by now in the film things are strange and creepy. You just don't know what to expect. You don't know if it's going to happen then or later but it's coming. It's on its way. Then they deliver it. Straker has given Mike Ryerson enough information about all the padlocks, do it this way, not that way. It was a lot to process but you knew it had to be done just right. Then going to the storm cellar doors and then down into the basement. When Mason is bringing the first Glick brother, Ralphie, wrapped in that black Visqueen [plastic sheeting], James kept referring to the little boy as "Giftie," Barlow's little giftie that he was bringing him. It just cracked me up. A shot I particularly love is when James says about Susan Norton "I've taken her to where she wished to go. To meet the man she came here to meet." By that time we were so deep into



Another posed publicity shot: Straker eyes up Susan Norton (Bonnie Bedelia), his master's soon-to-be vampire bride.

it [that] Mason had become the character. To me that's one of my favorite moments. It's very, very frightening.

The sequence where Straker mocks the priest before Barlow crushes the crucifix is truly memorable. Clearly this is no ordinary vampire.

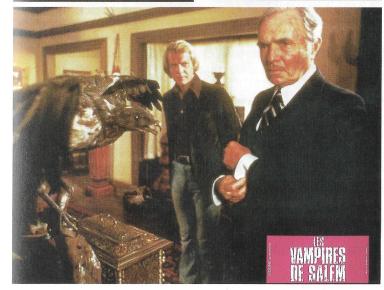
The room is trembling at the beginning of the sequence. It's almost like a small earthquake that precedes all of that. The window blows through and this black mass covered in a cape-like material starts to unfold. Barlow stands up. There was an inflatable thing under there that made movements. It was a challenge to the priest because it was faith against faith. Whose faith is strongest? Straker



is enjoying the hell out of this experience. Straker is the watchdog. He doesn't literally bare his fangs but internally they are there because he knows how this scene is going to end: it's going to end badly for them and he is enjoying it. At first Barlow bangs the two parents' heads together. Then Lance Kerwin spits on him. I don't remember if the spitting on Barlow is still in there or not.







French lobby cards for *Les Vampires de Salem*. The shot of Ralphie Glick (Ronnie Scribner) floating outside his brother's hospital window features the actor without his glowing vampire contact lenses.

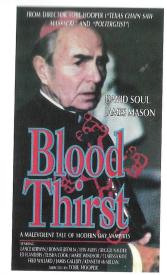
I don't remember seeing that.

In one version or one take, at least in the screenplay, he does spit on him and tells him "I'm going to kill you." Yeah the spitting was removed. Then it was between Reggie, Mason's reaction and the priest. The actual atmosphere on the set was kind of loud. It helped the priest [James Gallery] out a lot—to be afraid and to try and contain his fear, to stand behind his belief. He crushes the cross, which is made of lead, so it's bendable. The key to that was the reaction shots of Mason. He truly, like a good watchdog, is enjoying that moment. The intention was to take all 1,300 people out of 'Salem's Lot. That's quite a feast! They burned the Marsten House, then the whole town caught fire and that's why it starts in Ximico, Guatemala and they're still on the run.

As Ben Mears is staking the vampire Mark Petrie is being threatened by vampires that crawl towards him from behind. We see it as the lamp swings and illuminates the gloom. He's unaware of it and the sequence is as inherently creepy as the boy that scratches the window. Can you talk about that?

You don't know when it's going to end, how it's going to end...and I think you suspect that it's going to end very badly. Even if he's successful with Barlow these guys are approaching slowly. There's a primal fear about something sneaking up behind you and the way it was paced meant you didn't know which was going to happen first. Then the holy water gets dropped...that's the beginning of the scene. Then they lock 'em in and set fire to the Marsten House and you can hear Susan Norton screaming inside. It was relentless, that scene, mixing those two horrors and those two possibilities in one time. You've been surprised many times throughout the film and you don't know what surprise is coming for you next. I think that you feel that Mark Petrie is going to get it and it's going to go on. They do get close enough to him—cinematically speaking. It's almost at that point [where you ask] "Is it reversible?"

The film was released theatrically in parts of Europe, in Japan and



Salem's Lot was distributed on video in several different versions, and with some bizarre title changes. In this 1991 US release from On Line Cinema becomes Blood Thirst. Director Tobe Hooper was completely unaware of this 112-minute version of his film. The image appears to show James Mason as Bishop Nicolini in his final film, 1985's The Assisi Underground.

in Australia. What had to be done to it to make it into a cinema version? Did you have to cut it extensively?

More or less ruined it. When you take all of those relationships away—the inhabitants of 'Salem's Lot—it's what's happening psychically to them as this visitor comes. And so the theatrical version—such as George Dzundza putting the gun in Fred Willard's mouth—harkens back to the challenge of having to make a two-hour or 90 minute version of this epic novel. When you remove the main building blocks—and that is this strange fog that takes over the town and their emotions—then that's what's gone from the theatrical version. There are several different versions. There is a two-hour, a 90-minute and then a three-hour and a four-hour. The long version is the one to see. That would have been three hours and something because of commercial breaks and all of that.

There is an American video cassette that runs 112 minutes and is a theatrical version. The title was changed from *Salem's Lot* to *Blood Thirst*. Have you ever heard of that one?

No! That's new to me.

The cover shows an image of James Mason from an entirely different film. He's dressed as a Catholic cardinal. And on the back is a picture of David Soul in a 1940s film wearing a fedora hat. It was released through On Line Cinema. *Blood Thirst: A malevolent tale of modern day vampires*. It sounds as if the theatrical version was everything that Warners wanted to avoid in the first place.

Yeah, I would think so. That's weird! And that's from the States? It's not the film you created.

Yeah, I can't imagine that it is. It's probably just cut down to the thrills, you know? And the thrills don't thrill unless you have the backstory.

What involvement did you have with the composer Harry Sukman and what's your opinion of the score he created?

I love the score, I love it. I think he was [Bernard] Herrmann's orchestrator. I worked with him; I was there when the full orchestra was doing it. I was very impressed with what he did. The score is really right for that movie.

What was the reaction in the United States when the production was broadcast, and what did it do for you personally as a filmmaker?

Well, I immediately got job offers. It was like an overnight success. Instant. The television audience loved it. They had not seen

anything like it on television. I went with Kobritz to a TV Academy screening with at least 500 people in Los Angeles. They went through all of the emotions that they should. In that first screening—like the first screening of any film I've made—I was nervous. Actually Richard kept me from dodging into the wings; we were in the balcony. When the Glick boys get it—when the shadow stands up in front of them—he more or less dragged me over to the railing of the balcony and said, "Watch this, watch this, watch this" and then they all flipped out. And then I was cool.

I played the film in its entirety at a festival in the UK a few years ago and it got precisely the same reaction. Watching it with a live audience is entirely different.

Oh yeah. That's the only time I saw it—with a live audience. I did hear people saying they saw it on television and it was bloody but once again that's in the mind's eye, thank goodness. I'm thankful they fill in the gaps.

It was the same reaction when *Reservoir Dogs* was released. People swore blind that they saw Michael Madsen cut off the cop's ear but Tarantino deliberately took the camera off the action. You only hear it; never see it.

I know. I even remember it as seeing something. Maybe it was Michael Madsen's pleasurable dance!

It's James Mason all over again except James didn't do the dance.

That's right, he didn't do the dance! The picture takes place in the storage room of a funeral home. All the coffins stored upright, there is a hearse there and you can see the conveyor and the door that pushes the casket down. It's an old abandoned mortuary. Quentin shot up above what would have been the nasties—the embalming tables—[so that] you thought you were in a restroom. There are



scenes between Tim Roth and the others but you had to see it a couple of times to be aware of what the location was. It even made it subliminally creepier.

Were you involved in any way with the sequel? Did you consider it, were you offered it, would you have done it?

No. I didn't even know it was going on. I was shooting another film. I'm not quite sure what year that was. I may have been in London, probably was, for *Lifeforce*.

The word that people use when describing *Salem's Lot* and its impact was that it was a benchmark in television horror. Richard Kobritz and David Soul agreed. Geoffrey Lewis said the same thing. It redefined horror on TV. Is it everything that you wanted it to be and with the passing of time can you be objective about it?

I think I can be objective about it, and yes it is. I believe it is. I'm so comfortable with that film and with the support I had to realize it in a way that I could feel it. It's really rare that you have that—that all of those pieces come together in that camaraderie. I saw the film about two years ago after quite a length of time. I was objective in my viewing of it. I kind of knew what was coming next but I had forgotten some things. I'm very proud of that film.

Do you consider it to be the best thing you've ever done?

I don't know how to answer that. It could be. And I say that because I've made a point of not placing values like that on the things I've done. It's certainly up there with the top one or two or three. I've never been asked that question. It's certainly one of the best things. That is a tough question!



The Essence of Evil:
An Interview with Richard Kobritz
BILL KELLEY

Richard Kobritz is a creative producer in the Thalbergian sense. He is, in other words, a benign monarch. He believes in hiring the most talented cast and crew available to him, establishing the ground rules before shooting begins, then setting them loose to do their best work. As vice-president for production at Warner Bros. Television, Kobritz monitors all of the studio's TV output, a task which only allows him time to personally produce one film a year.

Strong-willed producers are, of course, nothing new in television, where individual expression is stifled and a director's personality is no more evident in a weekly series than in the commercials that interrupt it. But Kobritz, apparently, is different to most producers. His need for control is less a matter of ego than a desire to create a quality production. Kobritz trusts his intuition and wants to surround himself with collaborators who agree with his basic concept, yet will not hesitate to offer suggestions or changes. The measure of his formula's success is that Tobe Hooper, still reeling from disastrous producer interference on two features and a fruitless 18 months at Universal Pictures, emerged from Salem's Lot with nothing but praise for Kobritz.

This article first appeared in Cinefantastique, volume 9, issue 2 (1980).

121

On Mort Rabinowitz's moist and glistening set of the Marsten House at Burbank Studios. James Mason, David Soul and Reggie Nalder pose on the staircase. Kobritz entered the film industry in 1964 at age 23. He worked as an assistant director on several Doris Day comedies, then served as production manager on three films directed by Gene Kelly: A Guide for the Married Man, Hello Dolly! and The Cheyenne Social Club. He toiled briefly as a producer in the exploitation field for a few small companies, notably Fanfare, a now-defunct outfit. "Everthing you'd do for a company like Fanfare was horror in some way, shape or form," says Kobritz, who remembers the unreleased Hot Summer Week as representative of the firm's exploitation horror product.

Kobritz later worked as an associate producer for director Martin Ritt on "a couple of features," including *Conrack* (1974), starring Jon Voight. He has also been under contract to Twentieth Century Fox, for whom he produced a number of television pilots.

You produced John Carpenter's Someone Is Watching Me.

Right—which was called *High Rise* when we shot it. The network changed it.

It didn't look like an NBC made-for-television movie. It had a much more distinctive style. A lot of NBC's TV movies all tend to look like *The Rockford Files*.

That's obviously intentional on our part, and I think you'll find the same thing is true of *Salem's Lot*. I only personally do one of these a year, because I'm also in charge of production here, which doesn't permit me to do more. I guess I've got a few rules. Number one is I try to find a director who has never directed television, and who has probably never directed a union film, but who has directed a non-union feature—in Carpenter's case *Dark Star* and *Assault on Precinct 13*, and in Tobe Hooper's case *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

It's kind of a strange process I go through. It's hard to find something you really want to do if you don't have to do one, so you tend to be choosy within your own parameters. I generally gravitate



John Carpenter might once have been in the frame to direct *Salem's Lot* for the screen. Here, pictured with director Tobe Hooper and producer Richard Kobritz, he visits the set.

toward the same kind of material, you know, horror, terror, something like that in a kind of Hitchcockian mold. To put it that way sounds very egotistical, but I don't mean it like that; I'm just trying to get us into clear categories. Anyway, once I find that material we progress to the screenplay and in the meantime I try to see every movie I can, try to come up with somebody who is young...and who is inexperienced with all of the problems of working a heavily unionized major studio operation.

Why is that?

Because I'm looking for somebody who is visual, who isn't

wasting his time worrying about the politics of what the unions are doing—that's my job. More than anything else I want a director who is visual, who knows how to tell it in terms of camera, not in terms of dialogue, or not in terms of conventional camera coverage. There are two rules I always stress and in both John and Tobe's case, they not only embraced what I said, but that's the way they would have done it anyway. I don't want a zoom lens on that camera...and I want to keep that camera moving. That's, unfortunately, become the way of television. So what I try to do is a small feature within a short shooting schedule—which is difficult, but that's television.

What changes did you have to make in the novel in scripting *Salem's Lot* for television?

We went with the concept of a really unattractive, horrible-looking Barlow. We went back to the old German Nosferatu concept where he is the essence of evil, and not anything romantic or smarmy or, you know, the rouge-cheeked, widow-peaked Dracula. I wanted nothing suave or sexual, because I just didn't think it'd work; we've seen too much of it. The other thing we did with the character which I think is an improvement is that Barlow does not speak. When he's killed at the end, he obviously emits sounds, but it's not even a full line of dialogue, in contrast to the book and the first draft of the screenplay. I just thought it would be suicidal on our part to have a vampire that talks. What kind of voice do you put behind a vampire? You can't do Bela Lugosi, or you're going to get a laugh. You can't do Regan in The Exorcist, or you're going to get something that's unintelligible, and, besides, you've been there before. That's why I think the James Mason role of Straker became all the more important. And he is, I must say, perfect. That sounds like puffery, but he was well worth it. We wondered if he would be available, if he would be attracted to the material...and he was available, and he loved the material. It's just an incredibly good piece of casting. We were fortunate. It's a very good part, but he gives it so much himself. He's such a classy actor.

What was Stirling Silliphant's involvement? He's listed as executive producer. Did he also do a script at any time?

He wrote a script for the theatrical version, which was never used—and of course, it was not used for this one. In fact, he has nothing to do with this picture. There is an agreement with the studio because of his prior involvement with the project. He made some encouraging phone calls, and I think showed up a couple of times to say hello to people, but he has nothing to do with the production.

I understand there's a Writers' Guild arbitration underway challenging Monash's solo credit on the script.

We should know the outcome of that soon. No other scripts were ever considered. Monash was never even offered the other material. Obviously, the source is the same—everybody read the book, everybody wrote his own screenplay. This is the one we went with. I would hope Paul would get sole credit. Of the three other what we'd call "contributing writers," Stirling Silliphant has not protested, Bob Getchell has not protested, it's just this Larry Cohen... who had a really lousy screenplay. That was back before we were ever involved with it, back when the feature department had this very hot book, went through three screenplays and could do nothing with it.

What other changes were made from book to screenplay?

The changes we wrought from Paul's original draft—which was very much like the book—to what we ended up with from him make for a very classy movie. The major changes included Barlow, and that the Marsten House must never be clean and immaculate inside like Straker is. The house was very crucial; it must look like a veritable cesspool. I even put the line in the script myself that it must look like a shithole, only being that graphic just to get the point across. I wanted the audience to say, how could this man of

Edwardian dignity live in such a place? And yet he does. And the third point was not to have Barlow in Eva Miller's cellar as he was in the book at the end. It just doesn't work. I mean, from a point of sheer construction in a well-written screenplay, he's got to reside inside the Marsten House. He's a major star in the picture—the third or fourth most important character—he's got to be there. It may have worked in the book, but not in the movie. That house is the essence of evil—Godknows, Ben Mears talks about it until he's blue in the face—so to me that was very important. And one last thing: I pushed the death of the last vampire to the end of the film. There were three violent deaths right in a row—Straker, Barlow and her—and, all of a sudden, the killing and the device of killing became a really...nothing, you know? So I changed that.

In what way does the inside of the house resemble a cesspool?

It is a house of horrors...I don't mean with ghosts and that, I mean the dirtiest, filthiest house you've ever seen, as opposed to being pristine, which it is in the book. I like that dichotomy of Straker being immaculately dressed all the time, without a piece of lint on his lapel, and yet you walk into this mansion with him—the interior we created on a stage—and you know the plumbing doesn't work, the walls fairly seep with moisture, and you say to yourself they must defecate on the floors and in the corners because you know there are no bathrooms in here. And that all adds to it. I just couldn't believe the beautiful Victorian Gothic mansion in the book—it was like the last scene in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and I felt that would play against the horror. It worked well in the book; it wouldn't work for us. I believe that to be a distinct improvement, I really do.

One of the gossip magazines said David Soul was drinking on the set.

No-I didn't notice any of that. It's a very difficult script in that there is very little dialogue and the story is very intense. The

pressure was hard on him. I even told him one day, "Let the neuroses play—it's working for the character." He was not doing a normal script, with a lot of dialogue and everything explained. He was doing a very serious genre piece, dealing a lot in effects. I don't mean special effects only, but where scenes tied into other scenes because we're going for a special optical and stuff like that. In the same way that Cary Grant could question, in North by Northwest, "Why does my character react this way? I would never be walking into a wheat field in my suit" - and finding five very logical reasons why not to do it. But that unfortunately is the way it has to be done. That's the whole thing with that *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Saboteur, North by Northwest, The Man Who Knew Too Much genre of Hitchcock. By the same token, we were going for a genre piece here that was not always explainable in normal script language and normal dialogue, and I'm sure that would be very frustrating to an actor who takes his work seriously.

Did you realize how much Lance Kerwin and Soul would look alike?

Yeah, but they really don't. They're both blonde, but David is incredibly so—he's this blonde, beautiful, California young man. Lance is also light-haired, but there's this astonishing kind of forlorn, haunted expression to him. And he's a remarkable young actor, without a doubt the most talented young actor I've ever worked with. He is good, that boy, because there's an innate sadness—not as a person, but as an actor. He's able to portray a depth and a profundity you just don't find in kids that young.

You mentioned effects a moment ago. Were there a lot of opticals, or mostly physical effects?

Almost all physical effects, very few opticals. It's not a picture where we're going to spend weeks with miniatures or in post-production ironing out the details in the opticals.

There's a superimposition of Barlow's face on the moon in the last page of the script...

Yeah, I wrote that. We're testing it and we'll see if it works out. I put that in myself as a blue page, only because I kept thinking of it and finally I decided, why not? Let's have a final little laugh at the end. For the rest of the picture there's no laughs at all, and this is kind of cynical and a little ironic.

Another effect is the disintegration of Barlow — will we see that? On TV usually you see it but it's so abbreviated —

I know. I hope you see it. We shot it. That's obviously out of my hands, but the network approved the script and it's in there.

There's a still of Ed Flanders impaled to a wall of antlers. I can't imagine how we'll see -

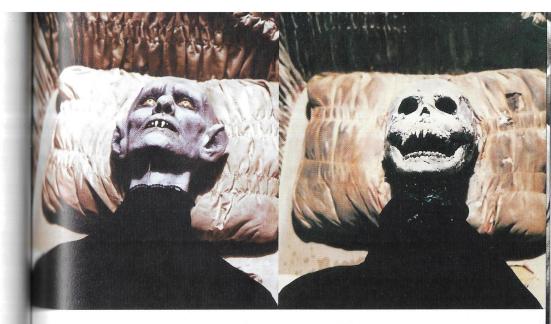
You will not see that. You'll see what's in the script—we fly up to the wall with him and the moment of impact is in his face. The long shot would be strictly for European theatrical, like the stakings.

How did you show the town burning at the end?

We never show it...for two reasons, (a) we didn't have the money to show it properly; and (b) it's too time-consuming to show that. I really want to wrap the picture by that time. I think the audience has caught up with us as far as what vampires are, the killing of vampires, the appearance of vampires; in a sense we must now go to the ending in Guatemala as quickly as possible.

Another change was the use of hawthorne instead of garlic.

Yeah, you know why? I was tired of garlic. And I was tired of every cheap joke, "is it gonna be an Italian vampire?," all that kind of stuff.



So I said, let's go with something a little different, and our research people came up with hawthorne. I'm just tired of all the *Night Gallery* business where you hold up garlic and he says, "I'm not Italian," or a crucifix and he says, "But I'm Jewish"—I just didn't want to get near a line like that, to wind up with an unintentional laugh at a moment when I definitely don't want it.

You obviously did more than just produce. Were you on the set?

Constantly.

And that didn't bother Hooper?

Not at all. I don't want to put words in his mouth here, but I think it added a bit of security. It was a very good collaboration. Things were discussed when we shot, before we shot. It was a very close relationship. I'm sure that doesn't happen much.

And you shot on location.

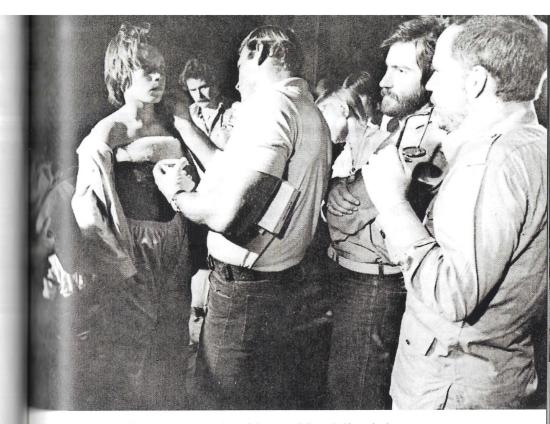
Yes, during July we shot two weeks in Ferndale, just outside of Eureka, sort of a New England Victoriana village, about 100 miles south of the northern California border. Then we came back here and shot an additional six.

The location brings to mind *Harvest Home*, the NBC miniseries based on Thomas Tryon's book. That was like four hours of boredom with a half-hearted climax. Did you see it?

I did, and that was my feeling, too, unfortunately. Again, I think we have better material going in. Number one, the screenplay is better. They just had Bette Davis and were hanging their hat on one performance. What we've tried to do in everything from our vampires to our head vampire was to be different. We're using a remarkable contact lens which is like half a ping pong ball, fits over the whole eye, and can only be worn for 15 minutes at a time before it has to be removed to let the eye rest for 30 minutes. They're not just bloodshot eyes. I wanted an effect like the eyes in Village of the Damned and its sequel Children of the Damned-I wanted them to be sick and decayed and, I hate to use the word but ... pus-filled. We also added one element which had not been done before: we put a reflective material in the contact, and when we turn our lights on it, they glow back at us. That way we didn't have to do burn-ins, we didn't have to do opticals, all of which you never have the amount of time to do thoroughly. I looked at Village of the Damned three weeks ago when it played here, and I realized how seldom their eyes really glow in the picture. For us, when there's a vampire, his eyes are shining, and that is important. Another thing was that we didn't fly our vampires in on wires, because even in the best of films you can see them.

In The Exorcist you can.

Yes, exactly. We wanted a method whereby we could actually fly a person in through a window. So we took a normal crane, like a



Rigging child actor Ronnie Scribner (playing Ralphie Glick) on the boom that will "float" him outside the window for arguably Salem's Lot's most memorable and chilling sequence. Tobe Hooper and Richard Kobritz observe the set-up.

Titan crane, and we put a long pole at the end of it, and we put the actor in a body harness at the end of that, so we were able to shove him into a room, and at the same time control his body movements. He could fly in, he could straighten up, he could tilt to one side, as long as the pole was not visible in the shot. We wanted to get a feeling of floating. And the effect is horrific, because you know there's no wires; we're shooting the whole window including the sill and wall above it. It was also something we were very nervous about, because you haven't got the time, in a television show, to make a special effects mistake; it had better work. We also did something

else—we shot the whole thing in reverse, and are projecting it forward, in the levitation and flotation scenes, because we want the smoke to be behind the vampires. That way we have more control over it. I think it turned out better than we had even hoped for—it has a very spooky, eerie quality to it. And the key, again, is getting a visual director, because if you read the script, you'll see there's not much dialogue. That's not to say there aren't those expository scenes, those getting acquainted scenes—but for a four-hour movie of the week, it is what you'd call "light on dialogue." And that's all the more reason why it's got to be visually strong.

Are you shooting a hard and a soft version, to accommodate the foreign theatrical release?

Notin terms of nudity or anything like that, but in terms of intensity.

You mean, in the TV version, a stake will be driven through a vampire's heart and go out of camera range, while in the European theatrical the audience will see the blood and —

Exactly. We're protecting ourselves. It's a different market out there, one where you have to pay, not where you see it for free. But in a horror picture done primarily for television, you've got to deal in scares instead of blood, which is what we're trying to do. What we want is to have the bogeyman jump out of the closet at the audience every few minutes. If it works, we're successful. If we're not successful...we're not successful. And that's the hard part—trying to find someone who can pull that off. I've been lucky. In Carpenter's case, he's a guy we'll come to recognize, not just because of the success of *Halloween*, but in the next few years through universal recognition, as a major talent. And the same is true of Tobe. Because I happened to like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which I think is brilliant. I saw it a few times—and I know they did it for \$100,000 in 20 days with a student crew, and all those things that don't help to make a picture good—and still there was

an incredible visual quality. What was hinted at and never seen really intrigued me.

There isn't that much outright blood and gore in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. You just think you see it.

Exactly. There are some beautiful touches. My God, I saw the way the camera was moving, the way the exterior of the house was established, things you don't normally see in big features, let alone television.

Dollying in under the swing after the girl as she enters the house...

Right, that scene in particular. I couldn't believe how well that film had been made, especially under those conditions. But once I saw it, I had my director.

How did you find Hooper? After losing his Universal contract and the fiasco with *The Dark*, he just disappeared.

I didn't know anything about a Universal contract or any of that. I heard about that later. For me, I find the best way to operate is to find the project first and then the director. I just ran a lot of films, some of them by people who were very well hyped. Some were okay, some were really terrible, and there were just none that compared to *Texas Chainsaw*. I hadn't seen it before, when it came out. It was just a title I knew of—it's obviously a very memorable title. I knew it had made some money. I had heard Billy Friedkin had liked it and had recommended Hooper, that he'd worked on a few subsequent projects, some of which were aborted—one, *Eaten Alive*, was made. That I never did see. But once I saw *Texas Chainsaw*, my mind was made up. I didn't even know whether Tobe lived here. We found he had an agent, and we called him up. Obviously I had to have a meeting with Tobe, to tell him how I worked, which

was probably totally different than anything he'd been exposed to—even at a major studio, even at Universal. I said I work very closely. It's essentially my decision what the final script is. Not to say your voice won't be heard, but—

But you're the boss.

Right, and this is what I want to make. Last year I did this kind of picture, this year I'm doing this kind of picture. They're in the same genre, but it's a dissimilar subject matter. I like a very fluid camera, I want incredible visual style on the picture and I also want to make sure it is cast impeccably well. We naturally have to deal with some television names to satisfy the network, but I really want to make sure it's a classy act we're putting together.

That's an unusual list. I would never expect a TV producer to say he wants a fluid camera, he doesn't want zoom lenses. Was Hooper impressed?

I don't know. Well, yeah—I think anybody who hears that is very surprised. I know I can keep a pace going and there's certain things I can change or modify as we go along. But I care that the thing ends up looking like a feature, that it's just not something that looks like every other television movie with a modern jazz score behind it. Then again, it's a subject matter that I've always liked and want to see dramatized well. I'm not into that, I don't collect stills or anything, I just feel I want to make an interesting horror movie—one with class, with believability. After I met Tobe, I decided he was the man to direct *Salem's Lot.* So I went to the network, they said okay—I don't mean they were overly enthusiastic. They didn't even know who Tobe Hooper was—and I just said, "Don't worry."

Was any other director ever considered?

No. There were a lot of directors that wanted to be considered,

but weren't. The book was originally purchased by our feature department, which then had several screenplays done on it—and this is going back a few years ago and not one of the screenplays worked. The president of our TV division thought if we could sell it to a network as a four-hour, we might put out another screenplay with a brand new writer and see if we could lick the problem. We got Paul Monash and structured some things very much different than the book and totally different from the previous screenplays—I mean, they were just bad screenplays. In a crazy way, Salem's Lot works better in a longer version than in a normal, theatrical version.

Not much happens in the book for the first half, and then everything explodes.

Also, the more you read of Stephen King-I'm like you, I've read most of his stuff-he's damn hard to translate to the screen.

The characters all think to themselves...

And all those internal monologues that give you gooseflesh while you're sitting alone reading are a real problem to deal with cinematically. So we had to work on that.

I heard somewhere that George Romero was considered to direct.

Well, I always liked *Night of the Living Dead* and his name was one that I'd thought of, but I never contacted him because I've got all the problems of, will he come out here, can I convince the network when a man only makes pictures in Pittsburgh? It was easier with Tobe. But more important, I just liked *Texas Chainsaw* better. It's a film that has gone, I think, beyond a cult status, which it always had.

In theatrical features today, it's probably safe to say no holds are

barred in explicit horror. Since, on TV, you can't show that, and even if you could, you'd panic the average home viewer, can *Salem's Lot* satisfy both the horror buff and the mainstream audience?

I think we can. It is really superbly cast. Even in the supporting roles, we always went for actors instead of stars. We have in Ed Flanders—who plays Bill Norton, the doctor—a man who just got an Emmy nomination for *Truman at Pottsdam*. We wanted complete credibility, complete believability. That to me was the real horror, a nice little town that's slowly being eaten alive by vampires and all of a sudden wakes up to that realization. We had to get actors of a calibre that could give us the credibility, not just nice TV names who are limited in their acting ability. That's Number One. Number Two is playing Barlow the way we did. He's not in competition with Frank Langella, not in competition with Bela Lugosi—it's back to German Expressionism in the final analysis.

And it'll be the first time most people will have seen that, anyway.

Right. And again, trying to give it believability by not having him talk. He's a monster, a fiend. And one last point, to me—and I've heard this before and never quite believed it, but now I do—you're frightened more by what you don't see than by what you do.

The credo of the Val Lewton films of the 1940s...

That's it exactly. There's that off-screen noise...and you don't have to see a person's neck ripped open, just that quick cut of the vampire or whatever, a hand coming into frame, is more frightening. *Halloween* was the best horror film I've seen in the last five to seven years in that respect, because you were jumping out of your seat every two minutes, and every scene was manipulated—but it was a valid scare. And that, to me, was important. You really weren't seeing a bloodbath up there. It was almost like seeing a 3D movie,



Reggie Nalder, in full make-up as the vampire, Barlow, pictured with Lance Kerwin as Mark Petrie. Producer Richard Kobritz wanted him to embody "the essence of evil".

because things were jumping out of the screen at you. In a way, I think that's what any good horror film tries to do.

Specifically, whose idea was the *Nosferatu* look: yours, Hooper's, or the make-up man's?

Mine. We brought the concept to the make-up artist, and he made a few sketches. We'd say, "No, we want the eyes darker"...and it was hit and miss, trial and error. It went like that until we had what we wanted. And, early on, I knew who the actor was going to be. Even back when I worked with Paul on the screenplay. Barlow, once he was determined to be ugly, was always going to be this one actor in my mind, if he was living in the United States.

Reggie Nalder — had you seen him in Mark of the Devil?

No, I remembered him from Hitchcock's film *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, the [1956] remake, and I thought he had a really unattractive face then. He was the one for me.

Curtis Harrington used him in a TV movie a few years ago, *The Dead Don't Die* (1974).

Really? He obviously works sporadically because of his face, unfortunately. But I knew that if the man was in town and available, that was my Barlow. Nobody else was considered or even discussed.

So you telescoped the book a great deal — trimmed dialogue, combined characters...

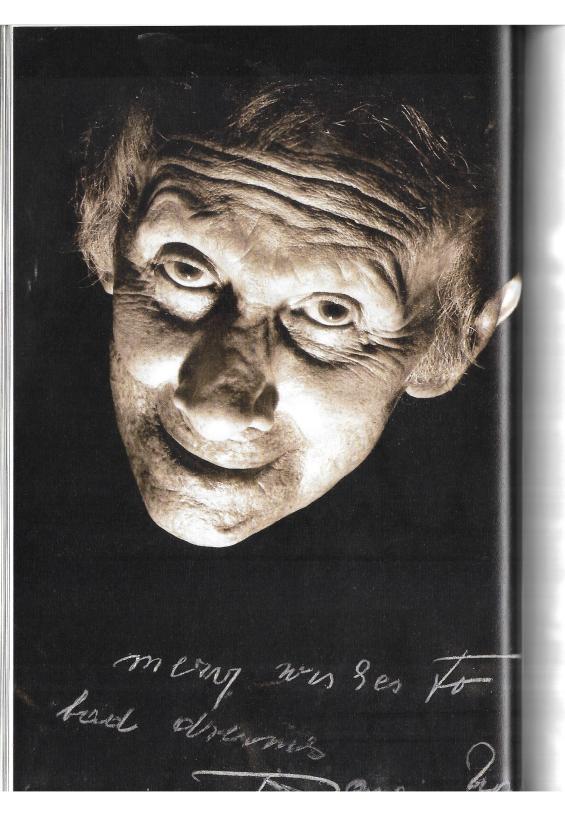
Only because there was no way of doing everybody in the town, especially when their fate was relatively the same. It's a small town of 2,000 people and we tried to concentrate on the doctor in the town, the sheriff in the town, the children in the town, and some other peripheral characters—a representative cross-section. But where possible—except in the case of what wouldn't translate cinematically or was just too long—we are very faithful to the book.

Everybody I've spoken to on *Salems Lot* says CBS wants the movie on in November. Can you do that?

I know they'd love to put it on during their November ratings sweep, and I think it's a good piece of material for a sweep week. But I also know that in this sort of movie, a good, atmospheric, old-fashioned, Bernie Herrmann type score is essential, and we've got to get that done yet.

Do you think one reason CBS might be anxious to get it on in November is they don't want a vampire movie on after 1979, that the crest will have passed? Are you concerned about TV censorship of Salem's Lot?

Well, my problem is obviously going to be Standards and Practices—what they're going to allow us to show and what they're not. The script went by them. They approved it. But I know they're going to come back and say they want a horror film but they don't want to scare people either. I have no doubt that's going to be the battle. I wouldn't mind a disclaimer at the beginning, "Viewer Discretion Advised"—if anything, that usually lifts the rating points up. I just don't want to start cutting out the horror of the picture. To make a horror picture and then start cutting out the horror...why make the damned thing in the first place?



The Twilight of Mr Barlow:
An Interview with Reggie Nalder
DAVID DEL VALLE

The reel life of Kurt Barlow and that of his interpreter Reggie Nalder have more in common than one might imagine. The fictional Mr Barlow is a European outsider trying to blend in (if only at night) with his new American neighbors. Reggie was also a European trying to blend into the fabric of Hollywood life as a working actor. Of course, unlike Barlow, Reggie Nalder was in life a gentle human being saddled with a face that only seemed to function for the casting director as the heavy in mysteries and horror films here and abroad.

When Larry Cohen originally came up with the notion of making Stephen King's master vampire in *Salem's Lot* a monster in the mold of Max Schreck's Count Orlok, instead of the one in King's book, one didn't know whether to laugh or cry. King denounced the idea in print and at the same time it did seem a bit cheesy to bow to the then popular 1979 concept of remaking every genre classic in sight i.e.: [John] Badham's *Dracula*, [Werner] Herzog's *Nosferatu*, etc. However, when all dust settled the diehard horror fans all united around Reggie Nalder's spectacular turn as Kurt Barlow, kept in the shadows until halfway through the miniseries, until the

141

[&]quot;Merry wishes for bad dreams." Reggie Nalder's message to an admirer. Image courtesy David Del₂Valle. The Del Valle Archive.

moment when he propels himself through the kitchen window as a black ball of horror, only to rise up a bloodlusting devil with no need to speak any dialogue, as his appearance says it all.

I was completely unaware that Reggie was making this film during the shooting of it in Ferndale, California. He came by my place on Oakhurst Drive in Beverly Hills (which was only two blocks from his own apartment on Whetherly Drive) one afternoon with a T-shirt which had the logo for *Salem's Lot* staring me in the face and an II × 14 photograph of himself as Barlow standing on the staircase of the Marsten House, looking magnificently evil in his black floor-length cape. Reggie had wanted to surprise me as well as keeping this latest job of his a secret knowing I would have driven him crazy asking to come on set especially when I learned his co-star was the great James Mason, an idol of mine ever since I saw *Lolita*, in which he is sublime.

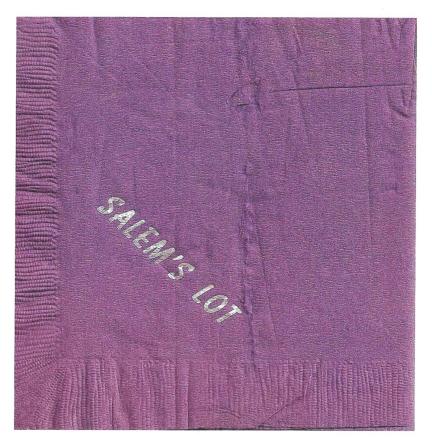
Even through I was denied set visits, Reggie somewhat made up for things by inviting me to the reception given the film by the Academy of Science Fiction and Horror which awarded Salem's Lot their Saturn award in 1979. The film was the talk of the town as Tobe Hooper was known mainly for the independent Horror film The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and had no prior experience in di $recting \, television. \, Warner \, Bros. \, sent \, a \, limo \, to \, Reggie's \, and \, off \, we$ went, in true Hollywood fashion. Let me explain that Reggie was a survivor in life as well as in films and he had long ago made peace with his looks. This did not mean however that he went about in the dark for fear of being seen by his fellow creatures; after all, one does not become an actor if one is shy, although he was terribly so at times. Yet he had been bitten by the acting bug at an early age and loved filming so much that he wanted to be a part of it, regardless of his lack of good looks. As Tobe Hooper said at the time he knew of $no\,other\,actor\,but\,Reggie\,that\,he\,would\,accept\,for\,Mr\,Barlow\,once$ the die had been cast to make him a monster.

The banquet itself was a large affair with loads of celebrities at every table. We were centered with producer Richard Kobritz along with several Warner Bros. publicists. At the entrance we

were given copies of the latest issue of *Cinefantasque* magazine which had devoted its cover story to *Salem's Lot* with the poster art featuring Reggie looming above the Marsten House with James Mason, David Soul and Lance Kerwin below. What we did not know was that in the text of the article itself was a time bomb just waiting to go off as director Tobe Hooper had thoughtlessly commented on Reggie's facial flaws by telling the magazine's interviewer he was looking for the ugliest man in Hollywood and that man was without a doubt Reggie Nalder. I wasted no time in removing the offending page from all copies at the table with help from producer Kobritz himself, who was disturbed by Hooper's remarks. Also, more than that, if I had pressed him into discussing the production that had just wrapped a few weeks before.

Reggie Nalder was already a famous character actor at the time of Salem's Lot since he was launched into the spotlight by the master himself, Alfred Hitchcock, in his 1956 remake of The Man Who Knew Too Much. His role as the assassin who falls to his death in London's Albert Hall is a show-stopper in the canon of Hitchcock films. Although we did not realize it at the time, lightning was about to strike twice with his performance as Kurt Barlow. The film was previewed on the Warner Bros. lot with a makeshift supper made up like a picnic in Salem's Lot with chicken in red and white table cloths attached to wooden poles. We sat behind David Soul who was at the height of his fame from his own series Starsky and Hutch, not to mention a one-hit-wonder on AM radio with "Don't Give Up On Us, Baby," a song which wore out its welcome very fast. David had a great time, having brought a six pack of beer into the screening room so that at key moments on the screen we would then hear him pop another can for the occasion.

The amazing thing about watching a nearly three-hour miniseries on the big screen with only one intermission gave the whole experience a feature film feel which it would never have again afterwards. I raved about the film to friends for days after the screening only to have them call me after they had seen it on the small screen complaining that it was nothing like I had described



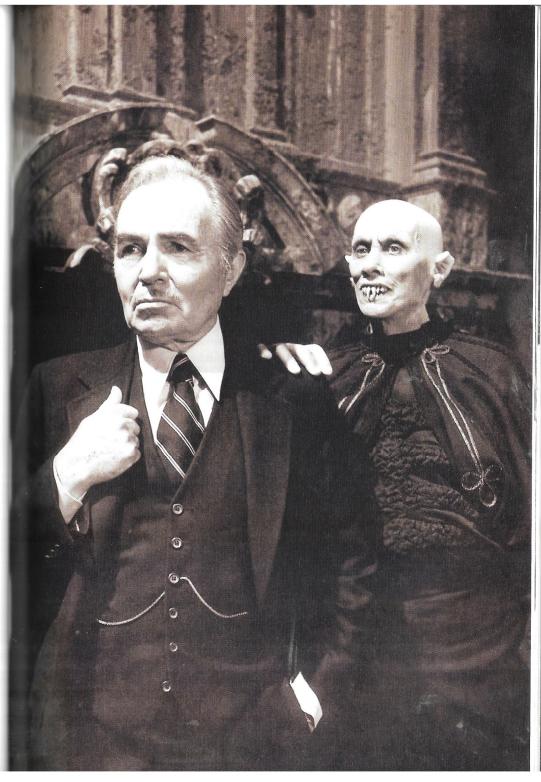
it. Reggie was a trip to sit next to during the unveiling of what was to become his second most famous role. When he makes his first appearance on screen Reggie let out a laugh that was heard all around the room then everyone there applauded making him feel well like a movie star. When the lights came up, David Soul patted Reggie on the shoulder and said "You were great, man, loved working with you."

Reggie never really went into much detail about the actual filming of *Salem's Lot*, but he did mention to me, while we were looking at the key book of stills out at the Warners' publicity office at the

144

Salem's Lot serviette.

Evil, Inc. Salem's Lot's premier villains, Straker and Barlow, smile for the camera. Images courtesy David Del Valle. The Del Valle Archive.



studio, that the make-up was very uncomfortable, especially his yellow contact lens that would move around causing filming to stop whenever this happened. His finger nails would fall off as well as his front fangs (they would not fit in his mouth), and then the fangs would go missing as the crew would keep them as souvenirs. He loved working with James Mason, who treated Reggie with great respect, and he assured me that the feeling was mutual.

Reggie Nalder would go on to make several other films in his life but nothing outside of the Hitchcock film would ever bring him the recognition he received from *Salem's Lot*. He signed countless photos for fans around the world and took the time to answer all his fan mail when he received it. Reggie may have looked like a monster in the cinema of nightmares, but in life he had the eyes of Bambi and the soul of Santa Claus.

In his later years Reggie withdrew from his social circle of artists and bohemians. In August of 1991, I returned from San Francisco to find a message from him on my answering machine saying "Auf Wiedersehen." I thought little of it at the time but later I was shocked to discover my mysterious and enigmatic friend had succumbed to bone cancer on 19 November 1991.

Reggie Nalder was a character actor whose aura of mystery and demonic physiognomy placed him in the forefront of Euro-horror personalities. His real-life drama was worthy of Sax Rohmer with a dash of Edgar Wallace. It is only appropriate that he be remembered in the same breath as Klaus Kinski, Anton Diffring and Udo Kier. This interview was conducted with him in 1989 but never published in his lifetime.

Tell me about your early background as a performer.

Acting was a family tradition. Both my father and my uncle were actors. My mother was a celebrated courtesan who also acted in German films from 1919 to 1929. My uncle owned and operated a notorious cabaret in Vienna which was appropriately named "Hoelle" ("Hell" in German) in the basement of "das Theater an

der Wien" throughout the 1920s. There are no filmed records of what went on in such a place. My early memories are filled with decadent, smoke-filled parlors where anything goes.

This environment must have been instrumental in your love of the theatrical.

When you are born into such an environment you know nothing else. I took dance, ballet and painting classes. This enabled me to help my uncle by painting backdrops and suggesting tableaux for the cabaret. It was a fantasy world and the only thing that changed it was the Nazis. I fled Vienna and arrived in Paris where all my theatrical experience would be put to the test. I had no money and had to find work in very untheatrical venues. By the time the Nazis came to Paris I was established in cabaret, specialising in a dance called The Apache. It was considered shocking at the time as the woman, my partner, was made subservient during the dance. In fact, she was dominated and loved it.

This sounds intriguing...

It was. My partner became my lover and we performed in private for those that could afford it. At one point I employed a hunchback to procure customers for our more exotic shows. Believe me, sex has always been a best-seller. We were very successful. It disgusted me to perform for the Nazis but survival made me do things that seem impossible now.

Did you attempt a film career at this point?

Not really. I wanted to. But it didn't happen until the war was over. One of my first [pictures] was *Le signal rouge* with Erich von Stroheim that was filmed in Austria with French money in 1948. It allowed Mr von Stroheim the chance to go home to Vienna. He was a genius. The mayor gave him the key to the city. He was so highly

regarded in France. I was honored to be in the same city with this man. So to make a film with him meant I was on my way.

What other films did you do at that time?

I also did Échec au porteur (aka Not Delivered, 1959) with Jeanne Moreau, a divine actress to work with. She was kind to the cast and crew alike. I loved her. Also Demain sera un autre jour (the working title of René Clément's The Day and the Hour [Le jour et l'heure, 1962]). It starred Simone Signoret who was what you Americans call an "earth mother." She was mad for her husband [Yves Montand] who was unfaithful. And she was always looking out for people like me who were starting out in films. Simone was all heart. I wish she could have been happier in her private life. I would not meet a woman like her again until Melina Mercouri years later, larger than life. But, unlike Simone, Melina was happy at all times.

Weren't you also in The Adventures of Captain Fabian (1951)?

Yes, with your great pal Vincent Price! The Adventures of Captain Fabian was shot in France in the summer of 1950. It was an amazing film for many reasons. Michelle Presle was the evil woman in the picture and a great friend. She had seen my cabaret act in Paris during the war. Errol Flynn was producing the film and the whole production was centred on him. Well, the cast and the crew spent weeks on salary without a frame of film being shot because Flynn was off being Errol Flynn and wasting a lot of money. Finally William Marshall [the director] walked off and Flynn directed the film from that point on. A disaster! Flynn was a great guy. He was well liked by the crew but he was no film director. It was a paid vacation for all of us. My part was small. I did get to work with a little monkey in that film. I love animals so much but I travel too often to own one. Vincent and I had one good scene together toward the end. I saw him again back in Hollywood. He came up to my apartment

in Hollywood and we had cocktails. He seemed to be having some problems with his wife at the time. I lost touch with Vincent soon after.

Let's move on to the film that made you world famous, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*.

Hitchcock was responsible for my coming to America, and I owe him a great deal. I didn't realize how much this film would change my life. I am recognized all over the world as "the man at the Albert Hall." Hitchcock never gave actors any real direction [and] I was a bit put off at first. You really didn't know where you stood with him. He told very crude and dirty stories like a schoolboy. He knew exactly what he wanted from you, and once you were there he felt it was up to you not to disappoint him.

What else do you recall about the filming?

Doris Day was such a pro and Hitchcock gave her little encouragement. She always felt unsure, which is exactly what he wanted. A writer named Donald Spoto asked me about this film and I told him that Hitchcock asked me to regard the man I was going to assassinate as if he were a beautiful woman gazing lovingly at the target before I shoot him. What I didn't tell Mr Spoto was that Hitchcock stared right at my crotch whenever he talked to me, never once looking me in the eye. At the time I was convinced he must be perverted. I already knew he was a genius.

What was your favorite moment from that experience?

Oh, the touring. I went to all the major cities in America and some in Europe. Of course the Cannes Film Festival was unforgettable. I felt like a star. I posed for publicity pictures by the Carlton Hotel with Melina Mercouri and her husband, Jules Dassin. In fact, I was the center of attention. One reporter remarked that the one scene

at Albert Hall would be remembered as one of Hitchcock's greatest set pieces.

Did you come to Hollywood after that?

Yes. After the Hitchcock film Paul Kohner got me a lot of television [work]. I guest starred in villainous roles of course, in 77 Sunset Strip and Surfside Six. I did one feature with Rock Hudson called The Spiral Road (1962). I played a witch doctor that helps Hudson who is lost in the jungle. A very nice guy, Rock Hudson. Very polite and completely professional. He looked like a movie star.

You also did two episodes of *Boris Karloff's Thriller*.

My favorite was *Terror in Teakwood* which was directed by Paul Henried. The lead actor, Guy Rolfe, was very ill during the filming, very weak and pale at the time. I remember the scene where I lead him to the tomb and describe the casket and the funeral service to him. When my speech was finished, Paul said, "Cut!" and the crew burst into applause. I felt like I'd just won an Oscar.

Did you meet Karloff at the time?

No. But I met him briefly during the second one, *The Return of Andrew Bentley*. John Newland, who also played the lead, directed it. There was also a talented actress named Antoinette Bower with whom I remain good friends today. I had no dialogue, just a black cape and a "familiar" who looked like a man in a furry costume. Newland did needlepoint between takes and loved Hollywood gossip. A sweet guy and a good director.

You also had a small role in *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) around this time.

I remember working only one day on that film. Frank Sinatra remembered my face from the Hitchcock film and thought it would

complement the other spies. So John Frankenheimer asked for me. I had no dialogue in that one either. About the same time I remember working on a prison film where I had dialogue and it was later re-dubbed with another actor. I hated it.

That would be *Convicts Four* (1962) with Ben Gazzara. Vincent Price played an art critic in that one.

Yes, of course. I played one of the prisoners and I suppose my voice wasn't hard or tough enough.

I understand that the Hitchcock film was also responsible for your casting in Argento's first feature, L'Uccello dalle piume di cristallo (The Bird With the Crystal Plumage, 1969).

I went to Rome to see Argento who asked for me through my Paris agent. He worshipped at Hitchcock's shrine and insisted I be an assassin who gets killed immediately in his film. I enjoyed Argento very much, a strange guy fond of using his hands to direct. We worked well together. He wanted me to appear in *Suspiria* (1977). I was to have been a professor in it. I was about to do *Casanova* (1976) for Fellini and one scene was all he offered. I would love to work for him [Argento] now.

Fellini must be on your list of geniuses that have directed you.

Of course! Casanova was a dream for me as an actor but a nightmare for poor Fellini as he was always trying to get money. He is like a child, very sensitive. Aware of all that goes on around him. Fellini was wearing a big straw hat on the set and toward the end of my scenes pictures were taken of me wearing Fellini's hat. He put his arm around me and hugged me like a bear. I wanted to be around him always.

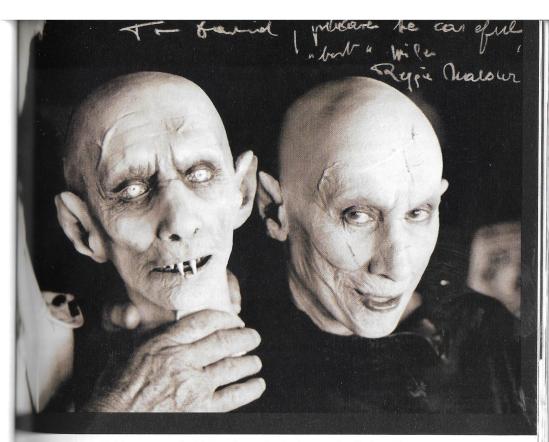
It was during this period of European activity that you made

those two infamous German films, Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält (Mark of the Devil, 1970) and Hexen geschändet und zu Tode gequält (Mark of the Devil, Part II, 1972).

The first film was the brainchild of my late friend Adrian Hoven, who produced both films and directed the second. In truth, Adrian directed them both. Poor Mike Armstrong, who wrote the script for Part I, arrived from England to Austria without any idea how to direct a movie. Michael and Adrian didn't like each other at all either. So after a couple of weeks Mike was removed as director and Adrian shot the rest of it. By this time Herbert Lom arrived and his presence made everyone work better. Little Udo Kier played his assistant. It gave me great pleasure to see my name on a Hollywood Boulevard marquee. I even took a photo of it: "MARK OF THE DEVIL STARRING REGGIE NALDER."

I know Michael [Armstrong], Reggie, and for the sake of film history, I should tell you his side of things. Mike wrote a script in which the Herbert Lom character is sexually impotent and becomes frustrated and begins to lust for Udo Kier, thus his motive for torturing beautiful women. Lom kills your character, Albino, because you know the truth. According to Mike, Hoven didn't like the gay subplot and rewrote it. So poor Mike was out on both levels.

The film made so much money for Hoven, it's too bad he and Mike didn't have a good rapport. He wasn't up to directing a feature and knew it. I remember the very well endowed actress Olivera Vuco, the one I try to rape at the inn, wanted to make love to Udo Kier. She was after him throughout the filming, even coming to his room at night. Since he was gay she became very frustrated. When it came time to shoot our scene I was supposed to overpower her. However this huge woman used her frustration on me and I was the one who was overpowered.



Reggie Nalder prepares for his transformation in the vampire, Barlow. The disembodied prosthetic head gives a clue as to the finished effect. Image courtesy David Del Valle. The Del Valle Archive.

Wasn't Sybil Danning supposed to be in Mark of the Devil Part II?

Yes. She was cast. I like Sybil. Adrian Hoven was married at that time and had a roving eye for beautiful women. He began a relationship with Sybil that was so intense he had a heart attack trying to keep up with her. He gave her all of his antique furniture that she put in her apartment in Vienna. His wife discovered this and demanded the furniture back or she would get a divorce. That ended any possibility of filming with her.

The second one had Anton Diffring instead of Herbert Lom. What do you recall of it?

The second *Mark of the Devil* went very smoothly. Tony Diffring became a close friend of mine and I enjoyed working with him. It was our only film together. There was a scene of me having violent sex with a nun that was cut, as well as much more violence, sexual and otherwise, toward the nuns. A fan sent me a tape of *Mark of the Devil Part II* and I couldn't believe how much was cut from what we had shot originally, especially the scene where a nun is impaled on a giant wooden phallus until blood is everywhere.

Sounds like the vomit bags went to the wrong movie! You also did a *Dracula* film for Charles Band. How was that?

It was called *Zoltan: Hound of Dracula* (aka *Dracula's Dog*, 1978). It was okay, I guess. Albert Band was a nice guy to work for and Joe [José] Ferrer was a great actor. We felt embarrassed for a while. As usual I had no dialogue for most of the film. I only speak in the flashbacks. I also did an episode of *McCloud* and John Carradine played Dracula. I played his butler.

Speaking of TV movies, Curtis Harrington told me that he fought like a tiger with NBC to cast you in *The Dead Don't Die* (1974).

Curtis is a friend and I suppose he did. I remember Joan Blondell very well. She was very frail when we shot the scene where I am lying dead on the floor of the shop. After a take she whispered to me, "I can't get up." She had knelt by my side but could not get up. George Hamilton was a real pro on that too. The scene where I rise from the coffin even frightened him! Curtis is a real master of this type of film.

Salem's Lot was also done for television with a shorter version released in Europe as a feature. Tell me something about making it.

I had met James Mason before at the Cannes Film Festival. He is one of our best actors, highly regarded in Europe, a joy to work with. The director, Tobe Hooper, had asked for me from the start. The make-up and contactlenses were painful but I got used to them. I liked the money best of all. The scene where David Soul stakes me took many retakes because Tobe wanted me to die in a certain way. I never saw the other version but the cuts wouldn't have affected me anyway.

You played the title character in *The Devil and Max Devlin* (1981) with Bill Cosby.

Yes, I played the Devil. I went out to the Disney studio and read for that one. Once again I had few lines to say. I hated working with Bill Cosby. He is a pig. I first met him in Rome where I did an episode of I Spp. Bill Cosby is rude, arrogant and very untalented. He walked right by me on the set as if I were a piece of furniture. I tried to be polite but he made it impossible. I have rarely ever worked with someone like him before or since.

Your *Star Trek* episode ["Journey to Babel"] is memorable to me and made it possible to go to that amazing 20th anniversary party on the Paramount backlot.

It always shocks me that people remembered things so trivial. When we arrived I didn't even have to tell them my name. The boy at the door knew my episode and the character's name. There were so many stars assembled in one place and all because of *Star Trek*. Amazing.

You once wrote a treatment for a film you would like to see produced. What was it?

It is entitled *Forgotten Idols*, and it is based somewhat on my mother. It takes place in the 1920s, and the lead character is a celebrated stage actress who retires at the height of her career. It is a mystery.

No one makes this type of film nowadays. I will keep offering until someone is intrigued.

I know this is a little sensitive but didn't you do a porno *Dracula*?

You mean *Dracula Sucks* (1979), of course. It was a very nervewracking experience. The Marshak Brothers who wrote the script in pencil on large sheets of paper, handing it to us seconds before we did a take, did it. Nobody knew their lines because they were being changed all of the time. We were all staying in a small motel in Palmdale, California. And people were going in and out of people's rooms all night. It was an orgy. John Holmes was the star of the film but he stayed on the castle set. I finally saw what he was so famous for, and it looked like a huge snake in repose! If you know what I mean!

You weren't credited as Reggie Nalder on that one, were you?

No. I was called Detlef Von Berg. But everyone that saw it knew who it was. I don't care. Work is work. And the Marshaks were happy with it.

I also saw your last skin flick called *Blue Ice* (1992). What's that about?

What do you think? Sex, of course! I play a Nazi general who likes to watch sex acts. It was shot in San Francisco over two weekends. So it was like a vacation for me. But promise me you will never see it!

Blue Ice would be the final film appearance by Reggie Nalder in a career that spanned nearly five decades.



A close-up of Barlow's death scene as he lies in his ornale casket. Actor Reggie Nalder's head is masked and perfect for the camera; his hands are not.



VII

Naturalistic Low-Key Horror: An Interview with Jules Brenner JERAD WALTERS

Reaching back into your memory, and starting from the beginning, can you tell me how much pre-production planning time you had for your assignment as Director of Photography on Salem's Lot?

Let me start with a bit of a disclaimer on the basis of the fact that what you're asking me about occurred about three decades ago. I hope I can be forgiven for memories that are less than vivid. That said, if I remember correctly, I had around two weeks of prep, considering that so much of what we had to prepare for was on location. I think there was also some consideration for Tobe Hooper, the director, because his prior work was in low-budget independent films and he hadn't made a studio film before.

Who hired you? Were you involved from the start of the production?

I was hired by Richard Kobritz who headed up Warner's TV

division and had been shepherding this project through re-writes for some time.

Were most of the lights used for the photography actual-practicals in the sets?

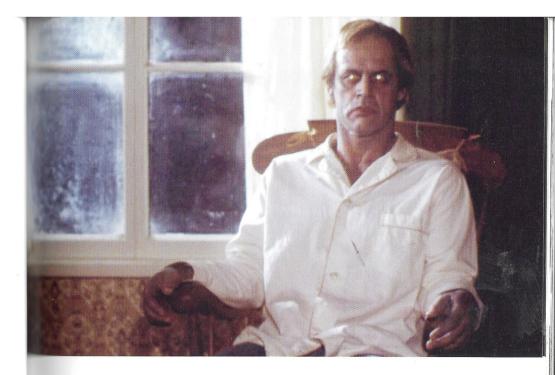
Only on occasions when it was useful. Mostly, practicals are made to seem like actual source [light] by balancing their output to the key level of my lighting or of existing natural light.

Most of the filming was done on location in Ferndale, using existing buildings (with the exception of the Marsten House exterior) as-is. Did the location shooting present any lighting or set-up difficulties?

Location shooting always presents challenges but also provides a great sense of reality. Solving the problems that arise is something cameramen and crews do on a regular basis. Advance location scouting allows us to plan ahead and to bring specialized equipment that may be needed beyond the normal package. This included camera, grip and electrical equipment, special camera mounts, etc. Scouting also allows us to schedule locations so that we can take advantage of the best natural light for the scenes in which it's a factor.

On the interior of the Marsten House, there is a nice effect where we see the characters inside the house, but the large windows of the house appear to face the outdoors and let in a lot of diffused natural light. Was that a difficult effect to achieve?

It's a rather common situation but is always a challenge to get the right balance between interior and exterior. That "right balance" isn't just a matter of exposure but also determines the more important matters of mood, style and to suggest what our eyes might see under similar circumstances. It can be quite delicate,



and I spend a lot of time studying the values before I turn the scene over to the AD [Assistant Director] for final rehearsal and shooting.

The camera moves quite a bit in *Salem's Lot*: Mark Petrie talking with his mother; Straker moving around in his shop. Were there any obstacles in these shots?

I'm a great believer in the first part of the phrase, "motion pictures." But, also, in not overdoing a good thing. Camera moves should be motivated by the nature of the scene and not the other way around. As with any technique, it becomes more effective when it's reserved for the right shots. That said, I don't recall obstacles impeding the design of moving shots, though some were more challenging than others. Anything you see in those shots are planned and controlled.

How were the shots done with the light reflecting off the vampires' eyes?

They wore reflective contacts and my job was to, again, balance a direct light to provide a reflective source without washing out the skin tones which I kept relatively low key, shadowy. That contrast added to the eerie, supernatural effect of these creatures. A good example of this is when we first discover that Mike Ryerson has been turned into a vampire. He sits in his rocking chair alongside a window. An outside light lines his face at a sharp angle while the front of his face is in semi-shadow, allowing the eyes to glisten from a low level spot at an optimal reflectance angle.

Were the night shots filmed in Ferndale, or were they done in Burbank? Can you tell me what kind of lighting was used for the night shots?

For the most part, the exterior night scenes were done in Ferndale, on location, but there were exceptions. The interiors were mostly done on the Warner's sound stage. I keyed a lot of the night shots with blue-tinged back lighting to suggest the moon as the primary source. I'd rim it out with liners suggested by the placement of practicals within or outside houses or buildings or other sources. When you're down to absolute blackness, I try to create a subdued ambience to provide minimal detail. Another way to put it is that you do within the range of film sensitivity what the iris of the eye will naturally do. In some cases you have to go beyond nature and just provide exposure in the least unnatural way possible, but that's a convention that we accept in watching movies.

What kinds of filters did you use in shooting *Salem's Lot*? Was *Salem's Lot* designed from the outset as a "soft picture" or a "hard picture" with a lot of contrast?



My description would be "naturalistic low-key horror." As for filtration, I have to go back to my disclaimer about memory.

What variations did you make in the color temperature of the light to enhance various moods of the film?

In the opening scene, when Ben Mears and Mark find the glowing holy water, I mixed the warmth of the ambient candlelight with the blue of the glow. This scene is brought back at the end, leading to the discovery of the vampire they've been searching for—once known to them as Susan Norton. This is a mix of that homey interior candlelight and a harsh blue from the moon outside creeping through the window onto her bed and face.

My color approach relates to the arc of the film. This is a cozy community of people living in warm, comfy houses before Straker arrives with his evil cargo. The warmth of tonality is important as the starting point for the grey coldness that

slowly permeates the place as fear and panic takes over. That, at least, was the underlying guidepost for my approach to color temperature.

Salem's Lot is shot very straight. That being the case, is there any instance in which you shot what might be termed a "special effect" in the camera?

What is probably the most famous and mind-lingering shot of the film is the one of Danny Glick's young brother floating outside his window at night, waiting to be invited in. I say that because it's the image that always comes up when I mention *Salem's Lot* as one of my credits. What with the floating movements and fog effect, it's certainly an instance of a "special effect" in the camera. I'm glad to say that this eerie effect registered in viewers' minds without benefit of CGI.

Did most of your actual photographic light came from the practicals built into the set? Were there times when, to ensure the quality of the image, you had to use extra units to supplement the existing practical lighting?

In a drama such as this (as compared to a documentary), it's extremely rare to depend solely on light from practical lights. My effort was to create the semblance of existing light and use it for dramatic purpose. Your question implies that I might have come close to achieving that goal, so thank you for it.

Did you have a good working relationship with Tobe Hooper? Were you able to achieve all of the lighting effects that he wanted?

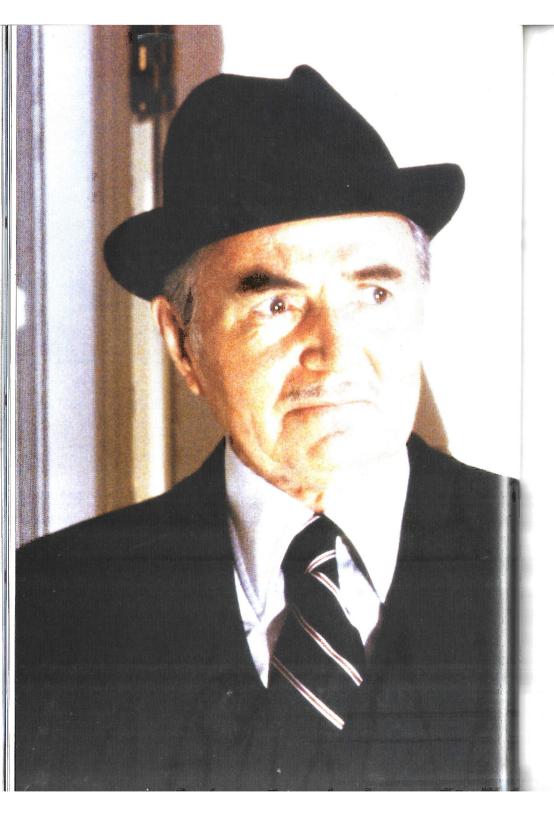
We had a good working relationship. I believe I achieved the lighting effects that he was pleased with because I don't recall any expression of discontent.



How did you get on with the cast?

The cast was not only a joy to work with because of the high level of their professionalism and dedication to the project, but also because of two important friendships from prior projects. It came to me as a surprise to realize, but one I relish, that I had worked with David Soul before. It was on my first American-produced film, *Johnny Got His Gun*. David played the Swede, one of the troops who would die in the war [WWI]. In his scene he plays cards (I think it was "21") with Jesus (Donald Sutherland). Obviously, this was at a very early stage in his career and it wasn't a part that made him famous. His boyish good looks and acting instincts were in evidence, however.

The second old friend was Geoffrey Lewis whom I came to know from our work on John Milius's *Dillinger*. He played one of the more colorful members of the gang and it made me a great fan of his work.



As for actors I hadn't worked with before, one of the great thrills of my career was having this opportunity to work with one of my boyhood heroes, James Mason. I still have to pinch myself to realize it happened. I literally grew up with him on screen as one of the biggest romantic and thriller stars of his generation. I was in awe of him and I think that the care I took with his blocking and lighting impressed him enough to realize he had a friend in the Director of Photography. To make it even more of a career highlight was his inviting me to dinner one night, during which he gave me a memento of our collaboration. It was a beautiful bottle of Mondavi Cabernet, which he kindly signed at my request. You'll understand if I tell you that it's never been opened.

Another presence on the set that was meaningful to me was Stirling Silliphant. It gave me an opportunity to chat with a writer whose work I deeply admired. His was not the final version that we shot, but he had done an interim draft and was on board as one of the producers. I believe I did see or meet Paul Monash who did write the final draft, which I considered an excellent adaptation of Stephen King's novel. As for Mr King, I never did see him. Which is too bad because I considered his book an extraordinary achievement of creating a town with a concise power to provide the reader a feel for every character. That connection with everyone made what happens to the people of 'Salem's Lot so horrifying.

You seem to be focused a lot on the literary side of filmmaking.

I consider the screenplay as the single most important part of the movie-making collaboration. I therefore have a special spot of respect reserved for those whose stories I'm lucky enough to be photographing and derive considerable inspiration from their craftsmanship.



X

Revolutionizing the Genre:
An Interview with Richard Kobritz
TONY EARNSHAW

Have you been a fan of the horror genre since childhood?

Probably. It's between that and film noir, I would say. Plus that was King's early writings and I was very attracted to those. I was an executive at Warner Bros at the time. They owned the material and were going to do it as a feature. They did two feature screen-plays—one by Larry Cohen and the other by Stirling Silliphant, none of which were made. Finally I was able to wrestle the project away from the feature division and put it into the television division, and that's when Paul Monash was signed to do the screenplay. I always feltit would work better as a miniseries—namely [because of] the length—than as a feature film.

Did Stephen King himself provide a script?

To my knowledge he did not touch that screenplay. I know that he

Interview conducted January 6, 2006. (Extracts of this interview originally appeared in an article in *Cinema Retro*, volume 3, issue 9 [2007].)

did a screenplay for *The Shining* and Kubrick rejected that. Again, that was Warner Bros and that was roughly the same time.

Was it pure luck that it fell into your lap?

I'd read it and kept [an eye on it]. I was Executive Vice President of Production in television so we could cross the corridor and say "What are you doing with *Salem's Lot?* I think we can do a better job of it." Finally, they acquiesced and we got the project. We got the novel.

You seem to have had a lot of clout. Were you fairly hands-on from the start?

Yes, I was. I had done a movie the year before where we had brought a director in and got him into the DGA: John Carpenter, for *Someone Is Watching Me. High Rise* was the working title but there was a porno picture called *High Rise* playing in America at about the time of the air date so we changed the title so the two would not be confused. So I was looking for something and *Salem's Lot* was always sitting there. Every time they'd do a new screenplay the feature department would reject it. Finally, [after] pestering them they said "Okay, fine. Take it." And that was that.

Was George Romero ever involved?

No, never. A lot of television directors wanted to do it. We were of the opinion "Let's do it just like we'd done with Carpenter a year before—somebody who doesn't know the rules, etc." Carpenter had just finished *Halloween* and he was going to go on to *The Fog*, so he was unavailable. We looked at *Texas Chainsaw* and said "Here's a guy who doesn't know the rules and maybe he would be interesting," and we went with that. That was very difficult—to get a network to agree to a director whose only work was on 16mm and on some bootleg print. This was the era before DVDs or videos.

So that was your first introduction to Tobe.

Yes, exactly.

What was it about his approach to horror...

A kind of maverick. He would listen. I think he wanted to do this. He was the antithesis of a television director who was at times nothing more than a glorified traffic cop. We thought he could bring something to it and at certain moments within the piece, he did. Again, the problem there with a television movie or a miniseries, the more rungs on the ladder—it's one thing to do a feature because you're trying to convince a studio to go with, accept that actor, accept this director. Now you've not only got a studio to contend with but you have a network to contend with.

Were you specifically trying to avoid some of the restrictions that certain TV directors brought to the project. True?

Absolutely. One of the first rules I've always put in is that everything is a hard lens. By that I mean there are no zooms. You move the camera. You do not move the lens and zoom in and zoom out and try to reframe within the shot. That's a mechanical process which eventually is the hallmark of television and shows through, unlike a feature where you go through intricate camera moves with hard lenses. That was something that certainly Carpenter understood and Hooper did too to a lesser extent.

You once described *Salem's Lot* as "Peyton Place turning into vampires."

Yeah, exactly. King said that he wished I had said "Our Town turning into vampires." But I think it really was Peyton Place. Everybody's got a dark, dirty little secret in their past. The town is cloistered and is waiting to explode in its own gossip and, all of a sudden,

a vampire and the man that precedes him enter the town. Because of their arrival they expose all that's wrong with the town. So I do think that. All of those characters have little secrets and it's very much *Peyton Place*.

What was wrong with those early screenplays? Why didn't they work?

They were chained to being roughly 115 or 120 pages. They were going to be 100 or 105 minute movies. There's just too much in the book and it's the building of those characters that you begin to know: the real estate guy who's a philanderer, the town tramp, the alcoholic, the cop who's a little corrupted, the priest who's weak and is an alcoholic. It takes you pages to build that up. Also, the arrival of the vampire. All of that stuff takes time. In a feature screenplay you just didn't have that time. You'd have to go right to it. I think that we're able to build that so that, by the end of the first night when the kid pops out of a coffin, we were able to hook you. One week later, when everybody tuned in to see what part two was, unlike a feature when all that would be compacted and truncated into 105 or 100 minutes.

What did Paul Monash bring to the screenplay? Was he able to expand the characters to fit the requirements of your project?

Exactly. We worked very well together. We liked each other. He was a very, very fast writer. He obviously understood television—in fact, he had been the executive producer of *Peyton Place*. The first screenplay came out at about 190 pages by the time [it was] finished—a four-hour miniseries. What I wanted to do was bookend it. I wanted to do the main body of the picture as a flashback and have these guys somewhere in some little town in Guatemala in South America, still hiding out. The vampires, or at least a vampire, is following them. I didn't want the evil to totally disappear. When the Marsten House burns down, that's the end of the book. But they're after them still and evil is never really smited, if you

know what I mean. It just ends or you're able to terminate it for the moment.

Some people believe it's the best thing Tobe Hooper ever did. Was he your choice exclusively?

Yes, he was. Tobe has had a very chequered career both before and after. The whole *Poltergeist* thing was most controversial. So, yeah, it probably was.

Talk me through the casting process:

The hard thing for me was that the first thing that the network wanted was obviously the one to play Ben Mears. They would have loved Jim Garner or David Janssen. Janssen was doing a TV series for us called Harry O and was readily available. Garner was coming over to do the new Maverick. Both men were 48 or 50 years of age, something like that, and I was dead set. I wanted to play Ben Mears as written, namely a man in his early 30s, and there weren't many television actors that the network would accept to lead a TV miniseries that had any sort of clout. David Soul was one of those people. Once he came over we got their approval and we just locked him in. James Mason...we looked all over for somebody. We always felt that Straker was the most important thing. The one change I had made from the book, and it was a radical change, one I still think was correct, was I didn't want the vampire to speak. It was an era of Frank Langella doing Dracula and George Hamilton doing Love at First Bite. Those were the kind of smarmy, romanticised vampires. I wanted to go back to Max Schreck. Therefore the vampire couldn't speak and somebody had to speak for him. So the human go-between would be getting all the lines. We looked all over. Finally the president of Warner Bros was in England on some business. He called me up and said "Guess who's staying at my hotel?" I said "Who," and he said "James Mason." We both said "Oh my God! How do we get a script to him?" This was before FedEx and

all those international delivery services but we were able to get some script quickly to Mason. He read it at The Dorchester and said "I'll do it." He loved it. He came over six or eight weeks later with Clarissa, his wife—she played the mother of one of the boys that gets killed. He just lent a real dignity and an A-list quality to the thing. [He was] a very nice man, very co-operative, easy to direct, very affable.

Do the British make the best villains — avuncular, sinister, malevolent?

They certainly have a history of it. I think in this instant, absolutely. You're probably thinking of Alan Rickman in *Die Hard* and all that kind of stuff.

He's probably the third generation, but yes.

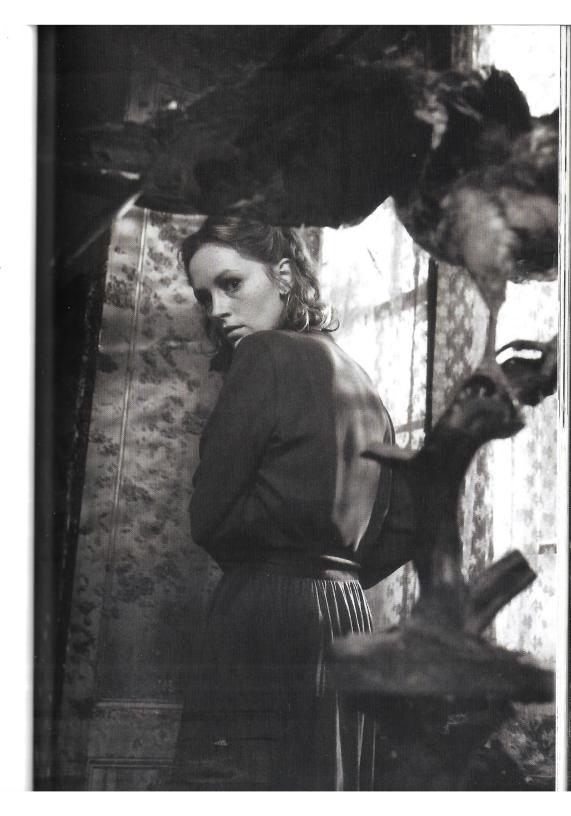
They bring a dignity, a kind of subtlety and an educated arrogance that not too many American actors can do. You're not going to play the Straker character as a psychopath. You're gonna play him as somebody who basically is better than the town that he's living in and all the townspeople realize that he's high society compared to them. I thought that was a very important thing.

Sinister and mocking always comes to mind.

Exactly. And Mason could do that better than most actors. He was exceptional in that.

Notwithstanding talk of Garner and Janssen, was David Soul the first choice for the part?

I believe he was. When you do these things they give you lists of people, most of whom are unavailable or who are doing another series. There was no other actor that I can recall that we brought in for the Ben Mears role. That was negotiated by our casting department and his agent at the time. By the time he said yes it was *fait*





accompli. For the town tart—which was played by Julie Cobb, who was Lee J. Cobb's daughter—we had brought in Kim Basinger originally. We wanted her to do it but she was tired of playing tramps and trollops. She would only do it if she could play the other girl—the Bonnie Bedelia role. So we passed on her and we found Julie Cobb, who was fine. That was one of those instances where we went for somebody else and they said no, [saying] "I'm tired of playing the hot little number." And she was right. From Here to Eternity was the miniseries around that time and I think she thought she could make a career out of being the nice girl. [So] she turned us down.

All the supporting roles are extremely well cast.

Again, for my own benefit, there was Elisha Cook and Marie Windsor.

Both from *The Killing*. You're a Kubrick fan, aren't you? Yes, very much so.

Bonnie Bedelia has the weakest part. Aside from Basinger was she your first choice?

I don't remember. She certainly wasn't. Kim was, and Kim turned us down. I can't recall the lists of people or anybody that we took seriously. Again, what we cared about at that stage was because it was such a vapid part let's at least get somebody who could *act*, and the girl could act. Theatrically her career had peaked several years before so we were sort of putting together a prestigious cast. The boy, Lance Kerwin, was already 18 but looked like he could be 15 or 14. He was terrific. We met him when some casting director brought him in. He had been in *James at 16* and had done a lot of television. He read for us and we said "That's it." We didn't look any further.

Was it just coincidental that he looked similar to David Soul?

Purely coincidental. Somebody brought that to our attention later on, and that was fine. It had no bearing on it and it's something we didn't even realize until after we were shooting the thing.

Reggie Nalder played Barlow in what had to be one of the greatest pieces of casting ever.

That's a funny story. I remembered Reggie Nalder from The Man Who Knew Too Muchand from The Manchurian Candidate. I would see him walking on Sunset Boulevard. And that's not make-up, that's a pock-marked, torn, burnt face. I would see him with his hair dyed orangey walking down [Sunset Boulevard] and I kept thinking "God, I've gotta use him in a movie." This is several years before and when it came time to cast the vampire in the way we wanted to go-namely a non-speaking vampire-I said "This is a miniseries. We can't be four hours in make-up putting on prosthetics. The guy must be very unattractive." So I told our casting director, "find this man called Reggie Nalder." Within 24 hours he was in, everybody looked at him and said, "Oh my God. If we can put lenses in his eyes, he is the vampire." That's really how it happened. There was no other discussion once the concept was agreed upon. Ten years later I did Alien Nation, the feature, and we had that problem with Mandy Patinkin because he'd be three hours in make-up, sometimes four. Then two hours taking it off. It's one thing to do it in a theatrical schedule but you can't afford to do it in a television schedule. So it's expedient and I thought it played perfectly into the concept we wanted.

Your interpretation of the vampire personified the essence of evil, but it was several horizons away from what Stephen King had written about in the novel. Why was it so important to make that quantum leap?

Two things. Philosophically a novel is a novel, a screenplay is a screenplay and they are not the same thing. Great novelists are lousy



screenwriters and great screenwriters are lousy novelists. So what worked perfectly in the novel I thought would work terribly for us, only because of the timing. Again, going back to Frank Langella and George Hamilton where you had that loquacious, smarmy vampire who was more a seductive vampire and a seducer than the essence of evil. If you played the essence of evil and went back to what we think of vampires—again, going back to *Nosferatu*—we thought it would have worked much better on film. It was as simple as that.

So it was your intention to make as big an impact as possible with this non-speaking role?

Absolutely. I think you have to. We are dealing with television and commercial breaks, you better get up to that commercial break and have a reason for those people to tune in after the break is over with.

You've gotta keep hooking them. You're doing a perpetual cliff-hanger for any kind of a television movie and you've got to be able to play with those commercials. Something that I learned when I did *High Rise* [was that] *High Rise* took a long time to build and we thought that was great. It was a very filmic thing, we spent a lot of time on the characters, do it very slowly. In retrospect I think we did it too slowly, but you've got to be able to play with those commercials and you've got to give the viewer a reason to tune back in after the commercials are over. If not, he'll grab his remote and switch to something else. It's only gotten worse in the interim.

It provides some magnificent scares which still hold up today. It scared me as a child and still does now, almost 30 years later.

You're not the first person to have said that of around your age group and older. When it was repeated on CBS I got a phone call from TV Guide—that weekly magazine listing all the ratings—saying that there had been a family in the Midwest whose four-year-old child had watched the first part of Salem's Lot and had had these night-mares between week one and week two and did I feel responsible? My answer was, "Quite simply, no I don't. I feel complimented because I have a four-year-old daughter and I never would have permitted her to watch that show at that time. But the very fact that this kid has nightmares means that it worked. On one hand it's the parent being delinquent and not the filmmaker."

Did you have to fight to show the horror as it was intended? Were TV rules very strict at that time?

I did something very sneaky. Every time there's a scare sequence I had the script broken into shots. As opposed to a paragraph describing it, each shot would be "close-up of the eyes," "close-up of a knife." It may take four pages to explain what the scene was but each individual shot [being detailed means] the network then okays it, never realising that they are okaying individual shots.

When the two censors at CBS—who were women, and one was quite elderly at the time—were shocked looking at it, I could say "Wait a minute, you approved this script. Shot 379 of the antler piercing Ed Flanders... you okayed that shot." And in each instance we were able to get it through. The only problem we had, not in the shooting of it but in the script stage, was the portrayal of what was a priest in the book. We had to call him a reverend, we couldn't show him drinking—he had alcohol problems in the book—and we had to show him as a weak man as opposed to a drunkard and a mediocre priest. We were never able to get around that. It existed in the novel and there was no way of changing it other than by tempering it by not showing him drinking, calling him a reverend and making his religion nebulous.

He is redeemed by giving himself to the vampire in exchange for the boy.

Exactly. Again, much more could have been done with that. The other change that I made [is that] the inside of the Marsten House is totally different in the book than it is in the picture. It became so real and, to me, so right, that you can't have this Victorian estate with wonderful antiques. Better to show it as this cesspool of evil with the walls rotting. It played into our vision, and King agreed. In retrospect, there are websites out here that claim, of the 36 or 38 things of his that have been done, it's always in the top five. It still lives. I didn't see the remake but from what I saw in the reviews, ours was infinitely better.

The Marsten House was said by the production designer to be "a representation of the vampire's decaying soul." Was anyone ever freaked out by it?

No. The exterior of the house was shot in Ferndale, which we built there. Also we opened up the picture there and shot for a couple of weeks then moved back onto the stages. You're talking [about] a 600-mile separation. Yes, it was a large, large stage that we took over and the place was filthy and dirty but there was no apprehension or spookiness whatsoever. It was business. At times it was fun and at times it was just long hours.

Lance Kerwin likened the production values and time spent shooting to that of a movie. Was that always your intention?

Look, the intention is to try and give the feeling that you are doing a feature to both crew and cast. I think the reality is that we did it in 40 days, which is much less than you'd do a three-hour feature, and we had an extensive second unit that went behind and killed the vampire and things like that. So we were sometimes shooting two units simultaneously but we were trying to do this for about \$3.9 million. It's an effort. We started in late July of '79 and finished at the very end of August and we were on the air in October. We had done another miniseries. CBS looked at that and it was a fourhour version. They said, "this will never play. It's just too long and too slow." So I was cutting that one down to a three-hour version while we were working weekends to finish Salem's Lot and slot it in October because of this other picture. We had to flip-flop series and that's not an easy thing to do, especially as we're cutting out an hour of the one that they thought they were going to put into the time slot. We worked around the clock. There's one scene that I still cringe at whenever I see it because we couldn't do anything with it, both in schedule and post-production. It's when Clarissa Kaye disappears and fades out with the crucifix on her face. That should have been far better. We didn't have the time or the money. We didn't have the technology. Today with CGI...believe me, her demise would have been far better. The rest of it is superb, and that's the tragedy. Things go wrong. The crucifix that he makes out of the tongue depressors...all of that works. It's just the way that we get rid of her that is bad. It's just a mediocre cheat. There were genuine [time and budgetary] constraints, sadly.



David Soul claims to have bought into the story in a big way. What are your memories of his reactions to it?

I think he was a television actor getting out of a very successful television series which he had written a couple of episodes for. I don't think there was any preparation. I would refer to certain pictures, like *Citizen Kane*. "I never saw that one," he would say to me. "We want to do something like Hitchcock here" and I'd name some picture. "I never saw that one, either." So, no, that was revisionist, if you will. He certainly didn't live it. It was another job for him. I'm not taking away from him at all but it wasn't as he describes it. He was there, he showed up and he did the work but there was no extensive preparation and, believe me, nothing biblical in his research or homework.

Soul said *Salem's Lot* came out when TV was still capable of surprising people. Again, was that something you were striving for?

The horror film today is going to have to reinvent itself. It can't be Saw II or Hostel or anything like that. We just can't do slasher movies and call it horror anymore. Every so often a horror movie comes along and completely revolutionises the genre for the moment-from the Dracula and Frankenstein in the Thirties to the subtlety of The Uninvited in the Forties. The Fifties would probably be Invasion of the Body Snatchers, The Creature from the Black Lagoon and all that kind of stuff. Then you go to Psycho in the Sixties, which really changed the world for a long time. Then you jump to The Exorcist where, my God, every time we go into Regan's room something is wrong and more horrible. You can see the audience wince every time one of the characters opens the door. Then I think we go to Halloween, which started a whole genre and unfortunately that genre has corrupted itself because it's now comedic rip-offs of Scream. We've got to come along and find something different. Anybody who makes horror today is at a standstill because no-one has come up with that one picture that kicks off an entire genre.

Were you trying to do something akin to the Val Lewton school of filmmaking?

Absolutely. And that's been said. Somebody said it had the Val Lewton touch which, believe me, would be the supreme compliment for anybody who produces. To do a body of work where there is a kind of linkage between one picture to the other-some vague thematic strain somewhere-[would be excellent]. With any filmmaker that I have admired there is a thematic "sameness" to their work, even though they could be totally different. Be it an Anthony Mann western, Kubrick through A Clockwork Orange, Hitchcock certainly, Frank Capra...It's that producer or director who does a musical one day, a thriller the next day, a psychological drama. They scare me because I don't really know them and somehow I think the picture suffers as a result. I want to know what their tastes are, and with Hitchcock you know exactly what they are. Again, he's a supreme example. With Spielberg you have the schizophrenia of Jaws, War of the Worlds and Close Encounters. Then there's the prestigious side of him doing The Color Purple, Saving Private Ryan and Munich. You've got a split personality there. I prefer the personality that gave us Jaws and Duel.

David Soul said Tobe Hooper and yourself were totally committed to the project, that your preparation was impeccable and that you storyboarded the project. Why were you so passionate about it — at the end of the day it's just a job, isn't it?

I don't think so. First of all it's a miniseries so you're committing four hours of network time where, if the first segment bombs, noone will watch the second segment. All of a sudden a network turns off on you. I was an executive there so I wanted to do good and I wanted to show our other producers that these things could be done on time and budget, and deliver on ratings. The preparation was meticulous up to a point. You sit, you discuss, you work the make-up, you play with the eyes and all that kind of stuff—again,

stuff that was new at the time. There was very little storyboarding—a moment here and a moment there but that was about it. We cared about being able to shock the audience as far as [we could] visually—like when the kid pops out of the coffin or flying the little boy into the hospital room. All of those techniques we certainly discussed. But we didn't storyboard [everything]—instances here and there but they were very few and far between.

Certain sequences have rightly passed into horror movie legend. One is Clarissa Kaye in the morgue but the images of Brad Savage and, in particular, Ronnie Scribner floating outside the window, will haunt me forever. Was that the essence of evil again — perhaps signalling that youth can mask a greater evil than we recognize?

That's a compliment. Yeah, certainly that was part of it—it's there to infiltrate every soul in *Salem's Lot* and if you can infiltrate the soul of a young person they'll only grow up to beget other vampires, other evil. That was always very appealing. If you can put a child in jeopardy tastefully then I think you've really succeeded in the horror genre. Again, *The Exorcist* being a perfect example of that. If you can really put a kid in jeopardy and do it tastefully where you're not either insulting the audience or going so overboard that you get into a slasher or snuff movie, then you've succeeded. And I think that's what it did. Certainly *The Exorcist* did on its level, and we did. When you saw that girl's head spin around it's stuff you've never seen before.

How much detail do you remember about how those shots were achieved?

That was very novel at the time. All those shots of the boys flying were in reverse. They were photographed in reverse, so what you're seeing is the film going forward but it was in fact being shot backwards. We had the boy, young Scribner, in a body cast at the

end of a boom pole where you could put a camera. If you look at it again, you'll notice the smoke goes in the opposite direction to where it should be going because you're watching reversed film. So we would start the image of the boy biting Brad's neck. We would pull back from there, have the boy pantomime his actions in reverse, so to speak, as the boom pulls him out from the window. Then we reverse the film and it looks like he's coming through the window and biting the boy. People came around and looked at that, not so much to see if it worked or not, but they'd never seen that technique employed before. No-one had done it within recent memory. We had discussed it at length and I believe we made some tests on it-not with the actors, but how we were gonna get this kid flying through a hospital window without wires. The only way to do it was to put him on the end of a boom on some kind of a body cast. We had the hospital nightgown on the Scribner boy so even that [the cast] could be camouflaged. Then what if we reversed the film, and started with the end of the shot and had the boy do his action backwards: if his head went from left to right, then we do that and it makes sense when the film is reversed and we run it forward. That really worked. When we saw that in dailies, we knew we had something.

The other memorable sequence is Geoffrey Lewis in the rocking chair. Memories?

He's wonderful. I had worked on a movie with him some years before that—a horror movie, actually, which is pretty mediocre. It's called *Moon of the Wolf*, with David Janssen. The best thing in that movie—the best actor—was Geoff Lewis, playing a guy who lives in the bayou with the accent and all that. So when it came time to cast that role I said, "We gotta bring Geoff Lewis in." We did and of course we cast him right away. I also think he put on the Maine accent. He's really a fine, fine actor. I've never worked with him since but, believe me, his presence is well remembered.

Of the characters, it's fair to say that Ben Mears is looking for some kind of absolution in Salem's Lot. He's been unbalanced for a long time and it's all crystallized when he comes home and that old house is once again attracting evil men. If he was slightly mad when he arrived, he's tipped over the edge by the time he stakes the vampire. Is that a fair interpretation?

Ithink that's absolutely correct, yeah. The ghost of Hubie Marsten, what happened in the Marsten House when Ben Mears was a boy, what has become legend or myth has now driven him back. And driven him back probably, if not on the verge of insanity, then definitely on the verge of some kind of breakdown. It's his catharsis, so he thinks—if he can ferret out what's happening. And now, lo and behold, the two new inhabitants of the Marsten House represent evil far worse than he's conjured with before. A character says something in the script—"desperate people do desperate things"—and I think that's very appropriate. Not only is it other people within the town, he's speaking about himself at that moment.

Is it merely coincidental that Mears arrives at exactly the same time as Barlow?

Probably. He arrives a few days earlier. Remember, we build up that Straker is in town and they're awaiting Mr Barlow. It's that one suspension of disbelief that every horror movie is entitled to. Once you have more than one, you're in trouble. But the idea is that the coincidence of Mears arriving and then, only a few short days later, Barlow arrives...yeah, it is a coincidence. But it's also the reason you're making the movie or writing the book.

What made you choose the Victorian village of Ferndale, in Humboldt County, California, as a location?

It was about eight miles south of a large town called Eureka in northern California. It is a Victorian/New England little town. All

of that stuff is real with the exception of the Marsten House—all the detail, the filigree, all of the plantings. There's something very insulated about the town. It's perpetually in overcast. It's a tourist town. It was used afterwards in the Dustin Hoffman movie, *Outbreak*. They went to Ferndale to shoot that. Also, we had done a three-hour miniseries [*A Death in Canaan*] about a year before with Tony Richardson, about a boy who murders his parents. So I had seen Ferndale in dailies and I thought it could work awfully well for *Salem's Lot*. So when *Salem's Lot* happened I said, "Let's go up to Ferndale and check it out." You're talking 600 or 700 miles [from the studios at Burbank]. It's north of San Francisco by about 300 miles. In fact, there were no direct planes there and we would have to switch planes in San Francisco to fly out.

How did the locals react?

Very helpful. They liked it. They had no problem. They were unsophisticated as far as a film troupe coming [into town] and even though one picture had shot there they had liked that experience and here we were back again. Whether that same mood would prevail today after the *Outbreak* picture, I don't know. But certainly we did not have the resistance that you have when you shoot a movie down in southern California. Everybody knows and everybody's got their hand out—"If you're gonna shoot my house, I want money for it." That kind of thing.

Aside from the Marsten House, was everything real?

That is correct. There's nothing up in that town that was built except for the Marsten House. [For that] we wanted something huge—something that looked so imposing and overlooked the town. We found this road that led up to a small, little [property], almost a cabin. And we built the façade around the cabin to the point that the owner wanted to keep the façade after we left. But we couldn't because it was a fire hazard, so we did tear it down. Again, that's the



lead. The lead is the Marsten House in this picture. We had to make it this oppressive thing that has looked over the township for many, many years, and it misses nothing. Mort Rabinowitz had been an art director in feature films and he understood the scale. He also understood where to spend the money; in other words, let's spend the money on the Marsten House and we can cut back on other things. Unless the Marsten House works - both interior and exterior - we haven't got a picture. And he understood that from day one. He knew that that was his moment and he did very well. I became quite friendly with Mort, and he did a Herculean job, believe me. It was a killer. We had to fly pieces of it up by helicopter to assemble it. It was a mess. We worked crews on Sundays because the set wasn't ready and the unit was about to go up there. It had its nightmare aspects but certainly it worked. I'd never second guessed the thought of turning the interior into a rancid environment. I still think that, for our purposes in that movie, it was the correct way to go.

Where did the design of the house come from?

It was Mort. We wanted something big, something built probably after the turn of the century – 1915, 1925, somewhere in there—but it had to be *big*. And you had to see it from every single part of town. You couldn't miss it. Those were his orders and obviously he did quite well.

So much so that it's on the front of the DVD.

Yeah, with Reggie hovering over it. I always like a symbol. I come from the era of Saul Bass and I wanted some kind of a logo that the network wouldn't tamper with. So, with a title designer called Gene Kraft, we came up with that: a still of the house that we put with Reggie and the moon. That became the logo as well as the lettering of *Salem's Lot*. If you look closely you'll see that I stole that lettering from Saul Bass's *West Side Story*. Check the logo on the ads and you'll see it. When you paint signs on streets and it's

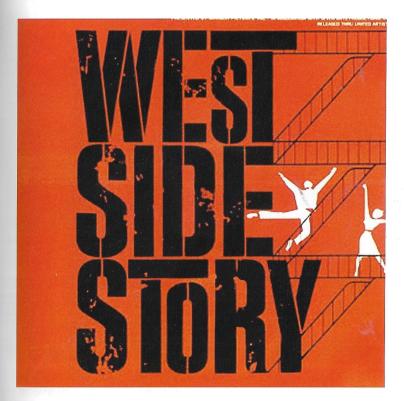
slightly decayed, that's what we came up with. We tried all sorts of lettering and finally I said "Let's try *West Side Story*."

Didn't Gene Kraft also do the titles and get an Emmy nomination for them?

That is correct. And that's few and far between. Horror pictures don't get nominated for Emmys, usually, and things don't get nominated for title design. But it did, and it was terrific. The moon that appears in the title was a stock shot that we had at Warner Bros and we enlarged it so the moon was as large as is possible. We did a time lapse of the house, taking it from night to day, and that became the whole motif for the main title. I want the audience in television to know exactly what this picture's gonna be about when it starts as opposed to starting on a totally different foot and then working our way in. There's even the call of a wolf that we added in the dub. I wanted people to know: we're here to scare you. You have the West Side Story lettering, then the names fragment on and off. That I took from The Birds. I wanted to be different and, again, stuff like that wasn't done in those days. I remembered the way the letters popped on and off on The Birds and I said, "Let's try something like that," which we did.

Was it unusual for a studio executive to have that level of film knowledge?

I think that's part of it. I can refer to a whole history of films and things that have somehow influenced me consciously and subconsciously. You have to salt away these little bits and pieces and you think, "One day I'm gonna use them." The whole ending, when they're in Ximico and they go back with the holy water...Susan is there and now she's gonna kill him. In the times we'd previewed the picture with audiences, people were gasping and screaming "Kill her! Kill her! Kill her!" and you know it worked. Then, at the end, to go out of the cabin, up to the trees and we see the moon again, it



becomes a kind of coda. Then there's a moment in the moon when you see the face of a skull: Barlow. And it's still there—the presence of evil is still there. They're still here. We got rid of this one but that evil will occur in some other place [and] in some other way. They'll be on the run for the rest of their lives.

Rumor has it that one local man drove his car into a telegraph pole when he saw the Marsten house. He said, "I've lived here 30 years and I've never seen that house before." Was that a common response to what you were doing?

Somehow, that rings a bell. I've heard it and I think it is true. There

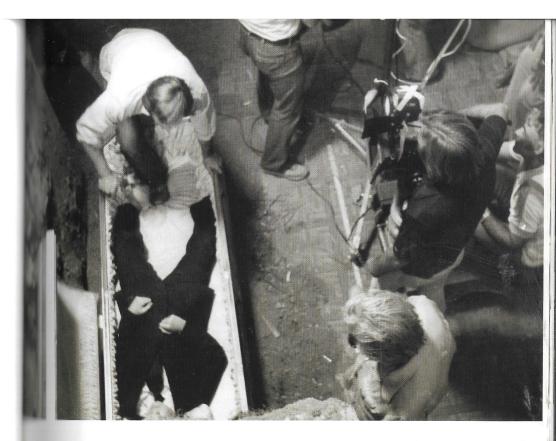
was some instance like that where some guy drove by and all of a sudden saw a house. Three sides were put up overnight. Then his car ran off the road. There is a real element of truth to that story. Most of the people were wired in, [so] they knew. It was a hard area to get to, plus it was a private road, so we didn't have many gawkers. If we had to shoot the street or shoot back towards the town, they were very understanding. They cleared it so there were never cars and stuff like that. The cemetery, by the way, is the cemetery in Ferndale. When we saw that cemetery—which I had never seen before until I physically went there—I went, "Oh my God, if this is not the perfect cemetery to have a body jump up." We did the body jumping up at some piece of land down here [near Los Angeles] while the excavation was done on a sound stage because we had to have the camera below. But the cemetery where the car drives in and we start the whole eulogy, that was up in Ferndale.

Was the cemetery sequence with Geoffrey Lewis filmed on a sound stage?

When he jumps into the coffin? Yes, from the moment he jumps in you're on a stage. That really worked and when I saw that in [the] dailies I said, "That's where we end part one." Part one was going to end a few scenes later and we were over in length so it gave us time to trim and cut out a few unimportant or expository scenes. It [also] gave us the perfect opportunity of ending the picture "to be continued" right on that moment.

Salem's Lot was released theatrically in Europe, the UK, Australia and the Far East. Did you shoot two different versions: one theatrical and one for TV?

We shot maybe two or three moments that were more explicit—Ed Flanders being shoved into the antlers. Little isolated things like that. Nothing big. It probably took us a full day spread over a number of days to try and intensify [the look], that being the one I



remember the most. They would never let a guy be hung on antlers in a television version and those kinds of moments we did—the Mason character having the superhuman strength of lifting Ed Flanders...all of that stuff we added on. They were like a shot here and a shot there—very, very small stuff. We added some stuff to the staking of the vampires. We lengthened that by maybe two shots, having Soul take the stake and hammer it down. We would add a "crunch" in post-production for the theatrical version so he really felt like he was going through a rib cage.

Was that something you had to sneak past the censors?

No, not really. Once they approve a rough cut then you can dub

it practically any way you want. They had a final laugh, though, because when it was originally shown on CBS, [for] the vampire staking and the first appearance of the vampire they lowered the lighting on the film. The brightness was de-emphasised so it was darker than it ever was when watching it theatrically or looking at it on DVD. And they admitted to that. They admitted in the *New York Times* that they would on purpose darken certain sequences because it was too vivid.

How proud are you of the production after all these years?

I think in its time, and Paul Monash said it better once he saw the finished version, he felt it was a benchmark. His words were, "This is a benchmark in television horror" and I think it probably still stands as that. There are things I would change, obviously, given that 26 years have elapsed since then. But overall I think it was a great rendering of a great novel but still done in filmic terms. The changes we made, I think, improved it—at least in terms of the audience we were making it for.

What did it lead onto for you?

Christine, Chiller, my own company, Alien Nation, stuff like that. I'm still working. I'm working on a horror script with a writer who I've done two features with, Rockne O'Bannon, so we'll probably make that. I'm also President of the Liberal Arts College that specializes in film and television, so I'm able to give them the benefit of my experience. I'm in a pretty happy state at the moment.

Would your preference always edge towards the fantastical?

Yeah, it probably would, to be honest. Whether it's fantastic or horror or just a "thriller," it's the same kind of satisfaction a comedy writer like Neil Simon gets when [an audience] all laugh in the same places at *Barefoot in the Park*. You know you've succeeded. When

you hear an audience scream at a preview or jump up at something you've plotted or set up, it's a real satisfaction. And I think that's why you make these things.

What led you to this point? What material were you reading as a child?

I was into film noir movies. I was a big movie buff. I was not into horror novels per se, but I certainly liked *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Psycho* and things like that. I had read the first Stephen King book of short stories [*Night Shiff*] and thought "This guy is really good." Then I'd read *The Shining* and finally I read *Salem's Lot*. I was at Warner Bros at the time and I thought "I wonder who owns this." I realized we'd bought it years ago and they'd been trying to do a screenplay on it. It was dormant but we'd got two screenplays. That's the reason Stirling Silliphant's name is on the picture. His contract said if the picture was ever made, regardless of whether his screenplay was used or if he was ever involved, he would have to get an executive producer credit. And that's why he got it. He was on the set one day to say hello and was paid some money, but he did not write a word and in no way counseled anybody on the picture.

Is it true that Larry Cohen allegedly became difficult over his script?

I have no idea. I have heard that, okay? But he was long gone from the project in the feature area by the time we were able to wrestle it away.

Was Stephen King ever on the set?

No. He kept writing me letters and we met in New York several times. He saw the picture and then began sending me his manuscripts for books that were going to come out—*Cujo*, *Christine*,



obviously, *The Stand*, things like that. And we became friends, at least at that time. Twenty-five years ago you could walk in with a book of his and get an instant deal. You can't do that today because there have been too many mediocre things of his out there. But he was a force to reckon with [at that time]. He was also unchallenged as far as being a best-selling author. There was no Danielle Steele, no Tom Clancy, no John Grisham, and no *Da Vinci Code*. There was only Stephen King. When I went after *Christine* we were shooting that picture as it was a number one bestseller on hardback, which is unheard-of, timing wise. And by the time the picture came out the hard cover was number ten or something, but when the soft cover came out it was number one. That kind of stuff could not be delivered today because there's just too much competition out there.

What's next for you?

You move from one project to another. I develop something, you sell it, and then you make it. But it takes a long time to devise these things [to the point] where you're happy with it and since I tend to do these things on a speculative basis-namely I don't try to develop with a studio, I try and go out with a finished product that they're going to then buy—it's time consuming. You better get your ducks in a row or they're not going to buy it. So that's what I'm doing plus I've got this Liberal Arts College which specializes in film and television and gives [students] a Bachelor of Arts. The winter semester starts tomorrow so I've been quite busy with that. I put a course in on horror, which I don't teach, and stuff like that. If these kids get noticed as filmmakers that's probably the first kind of picture they're going to make. If you go back to any of the important filmmakers they all started in some kind of genre related to horror, if not horror itself. It's a tough world out there now because so much has been accomplished, there's such new technology-most of it very good but obviously it can be abused. CGI can also be the ruination of the motion picture business at times when it's in excess.

So you're looking for the next thing—for something that jumps out at you subject matter-wise. And that's *very* hard to find, I gotta tell you. Very hard. Even the notion of it.

Has anything impressed you in recent years in terms of originality?

Probably not. *Alien* certainly did, and *Aliens*, the sequel. Cameron's stuff I've always liked. I loved *The Terminator*—the first one. I'm trying to remember the last time I saw a really satisfying movie within the genres we've touched upon. I saw *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, which had a few moments in it, but overall I didn't think it was that satisfying. Yet it was better than a lot of the pictures out there today. You cannot gross out an audience. You've got to make them a real participant. You just can't have them wince; it has to be more than that. They have to have an investment in what's happening on the screen and that's very hard to do today.

What are the requisite ingredients for making a five-star horror film?

A story that's compelling, characters that you really care about and that somehow you can place yourself in certain aspects of their character. And whatever problems these characters confront you've probably not seen it done this way before. And you can't as an audience figure out a solution—the movie must give you that solution. If somebody can come up with that, I think they've got a successful movie. That's a large bill to fill, too.

If someone comes up with that package, can they get it made in today's Hollywood?

Or can they get it made that way where it's not changed? I remember in *Alien Nation* we had so many problems with Fox. They wanted to do a picture their way. The script that we sold was far better than the end result. I'm sure that's the cry of a lot of people today. It's

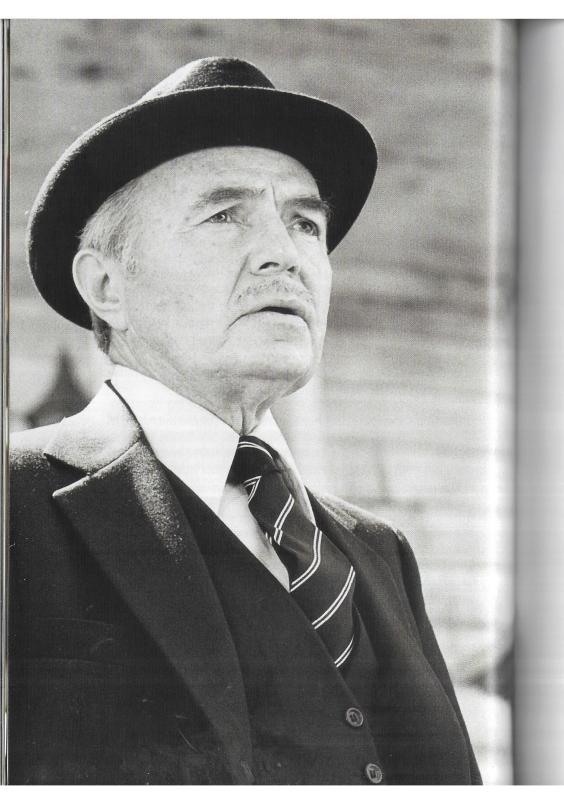
not only us. That was a spec script that we devised, walked in and sold to them. Their notes were [that], "We want the two heroes to meet on not less than page 26. Take this out. Put this in. We want a romance." They try to conventionalize something that was unconventional to begin with and that's the safety net that they try and impose on not only the filmmaker but also the subject matter.

In this age of three-hour epics like *The Lord of the Rings*, could *Salem's Lot* be made as a feature film in the way that you made it back in 1979?

Yeah, probably. Taking that same script as a template and obviously being able to do special effects now in a far better way and to be able to spend a little more time with your characters, yes it probably could be. Maybe someday somebody will as opposed to the Rob Lowe version.

Would you do it?

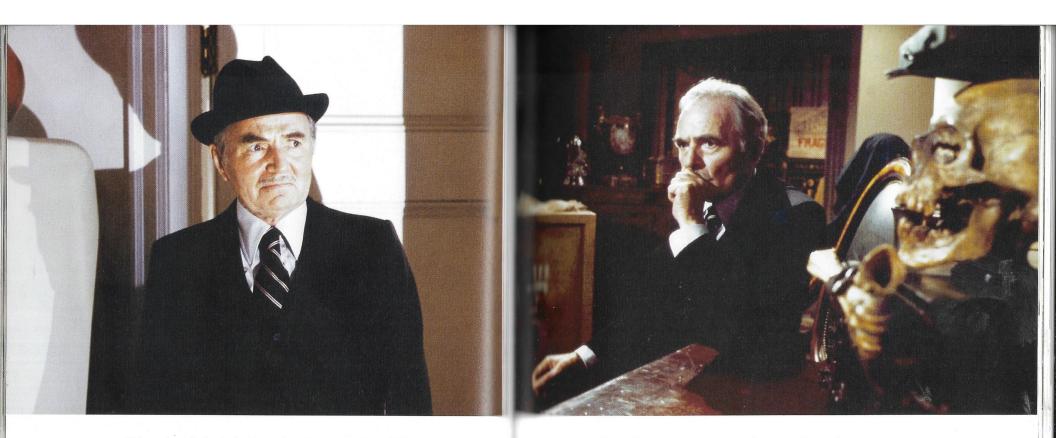
I don't know. I've been there, done that. You never say never but at the moment I would think not. It would be fun to take a look at that script, see what you would change, what you would enhance, see how you would do the vampire today—whether he would be a speaking vampire or not. I would probably keep the house exactly the way we had it in the picture, meaning a crumbling ruin inside and an immaculate façade outside-like a rotting soul, so to speak. Where we go from there, I don't know. So it's difficult to say. On one hand you want to leave well enough alone. We're talking 26 years later, a lot of people have been influenced by it, a lot of people have been scared by it and I still get letters and responses. It did have its impact and it's very, very hard to get a television movie to have any impact. We live in an era of Sesame Street where you can't sustain a scene for more than 30 seconds because people's minds [won't accept it]. Yet that picture worked, generally speaking, to the fullest extent it could.



The Gentleman as Actor:
An Interview with James Mason
MILES BELLER

The 12-year old kid vampire in jeans and Keds swills down a Coke—the brown liquid bubbling up around his pearl white fangs, then dribbling down the corners of his mouth—and grins. He has wandered into "The House"—a creepy, crawly place of real estate where walls ooze vile secretions and floorboards fester with mold and other furry deliquescent life. It's a domicile that makes *The Amityville Horror* house look like a bridal suite in the Beverly Hills Hotel.

This is Burbank Studio's stage 9, where *Salem's Lot* is being shot by Warner Bros. for a November airing on CBS. Based on the book by Stephen King (author of *Carrie* and *The Shining*, the latter to be released as a Stanley Kubrick feature next spring with Jack Nicholson as star), *Salem's Lot* recounts the exploits of a blood-sucking ghoul who terrorizes a small New England town, turning a number of its citizens into "blood brothers" while trying to build a vampire empire, and the efforts of a writer who, bent on solving the murders, eventually "kills" the hellish creature.



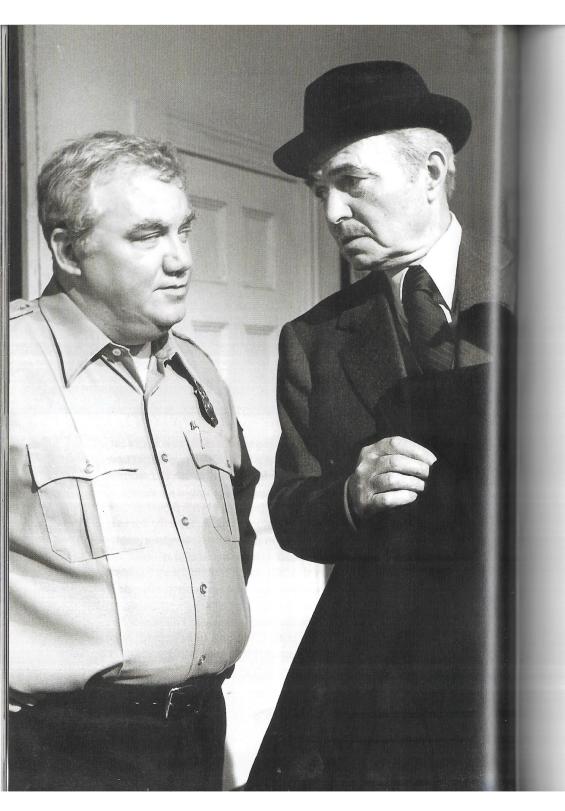
Directing *Salem's Lot* is Tobe Hooper, a bearded young man with a pleasant face who several years ago helmed the cult classic *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Walking with him now through Stage 9's cobwebbed sets designed by art director Mort Rabinowtiz, you begin to get the eerie feeling that the actors assembled to give life to this production might get swallowed up by the evocative surroundings.

Yet just when cellars, crypts, and crucifixes threaten to take over as "stars" of this four-hour, made-for-TV movie, putting the bit on the flesh-and-blood case, the name of the journeyman English actor top-featured in this production erupts to the surface, repeating itself like some medieval exorcism litany, dispelling such fears for the moment.

James Neville Mason stoops as he steps from the passenger seat into the kitchen/dining room/living room of the trailer parked outside studio 9, accommodating his six foot frame to the mobile home's tight confines. Clarissa Kay, his Australian wife of seven years, also a *Salem's Lot* cast member, needlepoints in the driver's seat, threading a royal blue strand through the nylon mesh. For the 70-year-old Mason, there have been many years of stooping inside trailers parked outside studios—44, to be exact.

This time he has come to this Hollywood trailer to wait to shoot scenes for a TV movie in which he plays an evil mystery man called "Straker," the vampire's "boss."

"A friend, Anna Cottle, who's associate producer of *Salem's Lot*, sent me a script and suggested both Clarissa and I read it," says Mason, readjusting the trailer's air-conditioning to high. Finding



the script well-written, Mason and his wife agreed to sign on, jetting from their Switzerland home to work on the project in California.

"Salem's Lot is much truer to vampire lore and legend than was the recent feature film *Dracula*," Mason adds. "There were too many inconsistencies in the movie. In one instance a cross could stop the vampire, in another it couldn't. The story wasn't tightly written."

Salem's Lot is Mason's debut in an American made television film, an experience the actor hopes to parlay into more TV work. For despite recent feature film roles in Heaven Can Wait, The Boys from Brazil and Murder by Decree, he believes the bulk of today's theatrical releases are "awful" and better material can be found on the small screen. Coming from a man who has made movie history—The Seventh Veil, Odd Man Out, Lolita, A Star is Born—indeed is movie history, this seems odd. But the golden age of moviemaking is past, he asserts. "Most current movies accent either pornography or action and are very low on value or entertainment. Given the time TV movies and miniseries can now run, much more can be accomplished on television than in feature films."

Yet while convinced of TV's power, Mason is keenly aware that he's still taking a risk in "jumping" from movies to television. For although the British actor with the hypnotic voice and deep-set eyes has been seen by millions of TV viewers on late show reruns of his old films—ranging from Five Fingers, Journey to the Center of the Earth, Julius Caesar, Lady Possessed, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, The Wicked Lady—his "draw" as a prime-time TV performer is untested. It could be that the man who thrilled movie audiences four and a half decades ago holds little appeal today for the hordes of young controlling TV's dials.

His involvement with *Salem's Lot* is thus somewhat of a gamble. Yet it is a move consonant with how he has managed his career through the years. For James Mason has always taken chances, betting on his talent to get him through all kinds of projects. He is like a man at the gaming table who has won many chips, lost many

chips, and now stands with a modest but respectable amount, set to bet again.

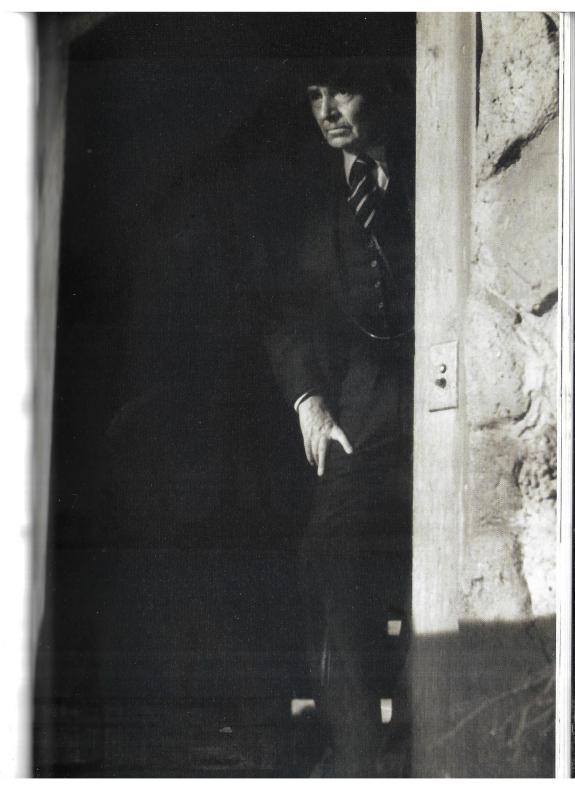
"Darling, how about lunch?" he asks his wife, the voice a shade warmer than Humbert Humbert, the professor of desire in *Lolita*. As they leave the trailer, Mrs Mason reminds her husband that she must be back at 12:45 for the makeup man to transform her into a vampire, a 45-minute procedure. Mason nods agreement. He buttons his sweater jacket, a lime green neckerchief caressing his creased and dappled skin, the gentleman as actor.

Son of a well-off textile merchant, Mason graduated from Cambridge in 1931 with a bachelor's degree in architecture, fully expecting to pursue a career designing buildings. But it was the Depression era; contractors weren't building—hard times for architects. Mason had appeared in some student stage productions while in school, so why not try it professionally? Anyway, it was easier getting work as an actor than as an architect.

Going into acting full time, he landed his first job through an advertisement in *The Stage*. After touring with road companies in 1932 and 1933, he made his London debut in *Gallows Glorious* at the Shaftesbury Theatre, appearing with a cast that included Charles Laughton. His first movie role was in *Late Extra*, a small British film made in 1935. After a slew of such modest productions, and a number of more illustrious stage plays, Mason came to the fore in a 1945 movie that was to cement his popularity in England and make him a star across the Atlantic—*The Seventh Veil*.

"Britain's popular screen menace," "England's cultured version of Humphrey Bogart," "a glowering cinematic glamour boy"—such was the clamor raised by America's press. Here was a suave young actor who, like Olivier and Gielgud, was thoroughly English. A Brit with dash and class. A sophisticate among Hollywood's rawboned American native sons like Cooper, Garfield, Bogart and Wayne. The ascendancy of James Neville Mason to the inner circle of acting Paradiso seemed only a matter of time.

But after a series of distinguished performances, something got fouled up. While Olivier and Gielgud were knighted and their



status raised to "artiste" by the critics, Mason became mired in place, stuck in the Purgatorio of B-movies and low-budget quickies. There were moments when he rose above the mediocrity surrounding him, but in the main his portrayals were undistinguished. It was a period marked by lawsuits (producer David Rose prevented Mason from acting in American films by instituting a breach of contract suit, despondency ("...the loneliest time of my life..." the actor once told a reporter) and a stormy marriage to actress Pamela Kellino that eventually ended in divorce.

For the past few years, however, things seem to have been on the upswing again. Mason's second marriage and his career are both flourishing (the couple received strong reviews for their performances last year in a Broadway production of Brian Friel's *Faith Healer*) and his spirits are also high. He has won back many lost chips and again is betting on his talent.

Burbank Studio Restaurant is packed with lunchtime diners—secretaries, production crew members and several name stars. As Mason and his wife move to a room off the main dining area, the secretaries sheepishly glance up from their cantaloupe and cottage cheese, sneaking peeks at the man whose voice has kept hundreds of impressionists employed.

Mrs Mason selects a table by a window and heads for a seat. But where's James?

"Stopped to say hello to Tony Randall," he explains upon arriving minutes later. His wife arches her eyebrows. "Tony Randall" is as meaningless to her as a name plucked from the White Pages. "Surely you know Tony Randall, darling," he says in disbelief, accenting the "Randall" as if that might help. "Does a number of commercials now, sings on one of them...not terribly well, I'm afraid."

Tony Randall is for the time dropped. Talk turns to television and its impact. "It's just staggering how many people see a TV film as compared to a regular film," the actor remarks. "A successful TV movie can attract five times as many viewers, if not more, than a successful feature film...just staggering." He takes a moment to let

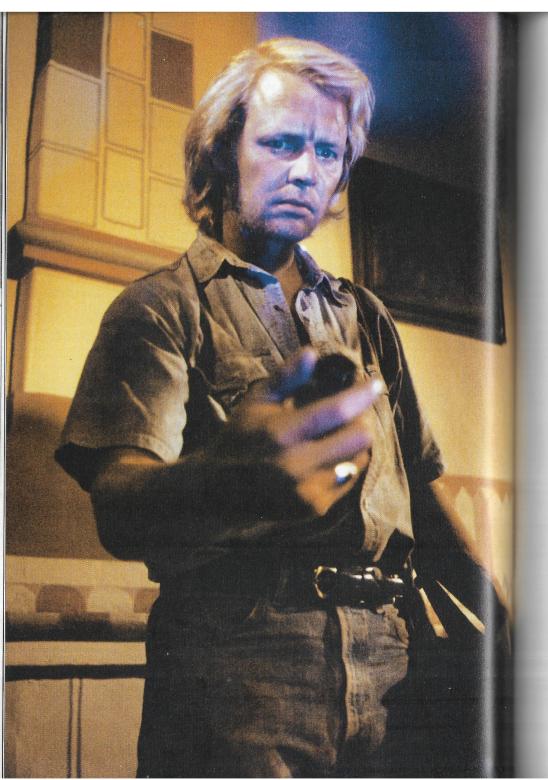
this fact register as his wife pours hot water into his teacup, today being one of those days when he is "a slave to arthritis."

So at 70 James Mason is making his first American made-for-TV movie. Making a bid to get his face, now puffier and thicker than it was when women swooned over it in the 1940s, across to a huge new generation, a generation of TV's children.

The actor lifts himself out of his seat, calling his wife and pointing at someone outside the window. "That's him, that's Tony Randall," he tells her, waiting for the flame of recognition to flicker in her eyes. "You know who he is"—a statement, not a question.

"Never saw him before in me life," she says and turns from the jingle-singing TV star outside back to her lunch.

"Of course you know him..." repeats James Mason, more to himself than to her. But it's no use. The moment is gone, the flame having failed to appear. And now he too turns quietly away, dropping back into his chair as the figure outside moves slowly out of view.



XI

The Purity of Terror:
An Interview with David Soul
TONY EARNSHAW

Starsky and Hutch ran from 1975-79. Was Salem's Lot your first big job after the series ended?

I don't remember. I did a whole series of films—three, four or five—at around that time after the series was over. It was certainly one of them.

You were a massive international name by then, exactly what they needed. I assume you came out of the series looking for bigger projects.

I didn't. I did documentaries. I came back and did occasional television but I was very interested in what was happening with the country. That's why I went off and worked with the farmers [on] FarmAid—I come from South Dakota so I spent a great deal of time

Interview conducted February 9, 2002. (Extracts of this interview originally appeared in *Cinema Retro*, volume 3, issue 9 [2007]).

re-discovering my own home state and the West, the American Indian movement I was very much involved with. Health issues, particularly. I did a little documentary on water. I did another, [Fighting Ministers] on Pittsburgh steel. That was round about 1986. There's a similar situation around this part of the country [the north of England]—things have shut down, causing 30% unemployment in its wake. It's an interesting kind of situation. I got pretty much involved in that kind of thing.

How did you come back with Salem's Lot?

That was Richard Kobritz and Tobe Hooper.

Was the script already written and had you read the book? How did that manifest itself?

I didn't know Stephen King, [but] he was supposed to be adapting this film. *Carrie* had come first but this was the first one for television. What's so remarkable about the film is that it's so simply made. There were no special effects in it—not *real* special effects.

What was it about the project that made you want to do it?

The script. It was a good story. I liked that. I liked the biblical overtones—Satanism, traditional style. And I liked the character in the story—he was this writer. I liked that. Also I liked the location where we were shooting up in Ferndale, northern California. And as an actor I was a huge, huge fan of James Mason. I loved him. Bonnie Bedelia was in it, who was very good. Ken McMillan. The wonderful Geoff Lewis, who was an old friend of mine and skiing buddy. Everything feltright. And it had a sense of moment to it: you walked into Richard Kobritz's office and it was the Marsten House. It was built like the Marsten House! He took it seriously. He liked it dark so you had kind of a spooky feeling. So it seemed like a good thing to do. I wasn't looking for anything particularly different [to

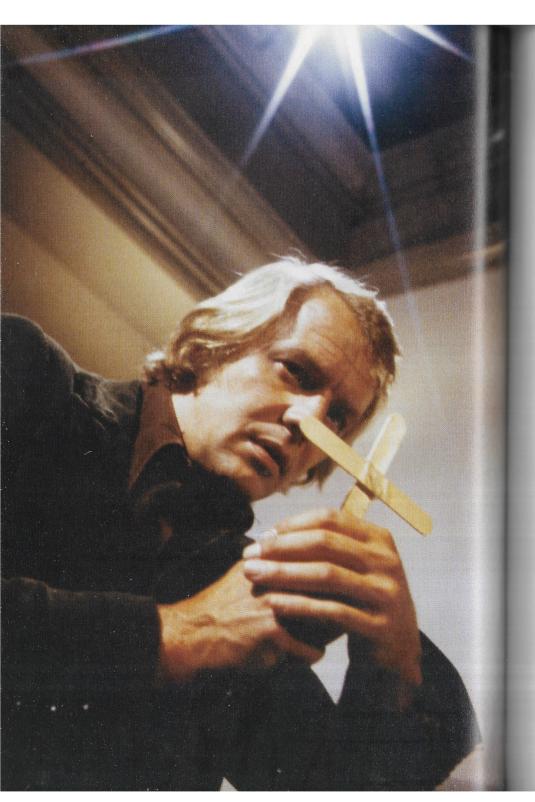
Starsky and Hutch]. I also had a production deal because I developed this script on Wounded Knee in 1973 based on the experiences of a very dear friend of mine, Kevin McKinnon, a journalist. My own peripheral experience paralleled his experience: he was the only journalist to stay for the whole 71 days. He was the last guy in—he sort of "stole" his way in, so to speak, by forging Press papers. So I had a production deal and I got a deal with NBC to do Wounded Knee. I had commissioned a book, working with Kevin, called Now the Prophecy. Kevin and I worked on it for more than a year at Warners. I was at Warners at the time and I think probably the proximity [made them think] "Oh, he's here. We've got a production going anyway." That's probably how it happened.

How did they sell it to you?

It was on paper. It was in the script. You read the script and you make up your own mind whether you like it or you don't like it. And I liked it.

It was a significant TV miniseries — three hours of terror from THE best-selling novelist of the moment. Was it daunting? Did you feel the pressure of carrying the production?

No, because, like a lot of those things back then, you still could be surprised by television. They were trying different substantive things. How it's affecting things. It was one of the things that I loved about television back then: when it was innovative it was really innovative. Starsky and Hutch was a totally innovative show, and kind of a watershed. The buddy-buddy cop was spawned by Starsky and Hutch. Before then there was Freebie and the Bean, which was kind of the first film. Starsky and Hutch was that way and I think Salem's Lot was like that. It's only in retrospect that you can ask a question like you're asking. I understand the question but when the moment is happening you don't question it. You just think "Wow. That's great."



If you didn't realize it was ground-breaking at the time did you at least realize it was a very special project?

Yes, very much so. Anytime you have a character like James Mason involved it's got to be a special project. And the commitment of the producer, Richard, was undeniable. And Tobe Hooper. Here was a guy whose major piece was *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. He was not what you'd call one of the golden boys of the network; he was a real renegade. A weird little guy. A *strange* guy. But very gentle. He just had a take on things. Everything was so carefully storyboarded. One of the reasons they accepted Tobe was because his preparation was so impeccable. He and Richard worked very, very carefully on the storyboards so there was no doubt in anybodies' minds that the guy was prepared. I think that's one of the things that really swung it for Tobe.

How did the two of you get on?

Very well. I like weird people—they're my favorite people. I didn't have a problem with him at all. I liked him. I should qualify the word "weird" because I've been known to be a little "difficult," but I'm not. When I like you, I like things right, and you wanna do it right. One of the things that I appreciated about Tobe was his attention to detail and his care to get things right. I think his relationship with the actors, generally speaking, was very good. I don't think Mason was particularly impressed with him one way or the other, you know? Mason played Mason. I think Tobe just left him alone, and it was fine. I got on famously with James. I just adored the man. I used to play cards with him and Clarissa—he and Clarissa had the other trailer, and we'd hang out. He was a gent of a guy. What a sweet man. Lew Ayres was in that, Elisha Cook, the wonderful guy from *The Deer Hunter*, George Dzundza. It was a good cast.

Paul Monash was the writer. Any memories of him?

No, but Stirling [Silliphant] I only really knew later because I did a pilot for a series called Harry's Hong Kong. We did that in Hong Kong, and Stirling was the author. We spent a good deal of time mapping out where this character would be going in South East Asia. Plus he was married to a girl who grew up in Singapore. So I don't have any memories of the writers. My main memories are of Richard Kobritz, who looked like one of the living dead! He had that pallor! He looked like he worked in a funeral parlor. He looked incredible in his office, and once you got him out into the sunlight you didn't go back to his office. At the "house" an accident happened. One afternoon we were out in front of the house. I was standing right about here, on the steps. I looked down onto the county road down below and, all of a sudden, this car comes around the bend and into a telephone pole. [The driver] had seen the house! He'd lived in the community for 30 years and all of a sudden this house was up there! He just lost it. [The exterior of the Marsten House] was [built] over the top of an existing house. It was too bad for the guy but it really was a funny moment because the guy was so used to seeing something else up there on that hill and then you look at this house, which is fairly imposing. He didn't know what to do with himself so he hit a telephone pole.

You shared few scenes with Mason. What do recall of working with him? Did you spend time together off set? His character was condescending, slightly camp. What was Mason like in real life?

On set the thing that impresses you the most about someone like him is the economy of what he does. It's very specific and very economic. What it does for you is bring you to that same place. So it's not about how much you do, it's about what you do—less of the right thing. Less is not always better. You can really tell a pro; he's not all over the place. He's clear and to the point. Part of it was James Mason and part of it was the fact that he was Straker—he embraced the role. You walked on the set and Straker was there. I was a young actor—I didn't even call myself an actor yet. I was a young stud/

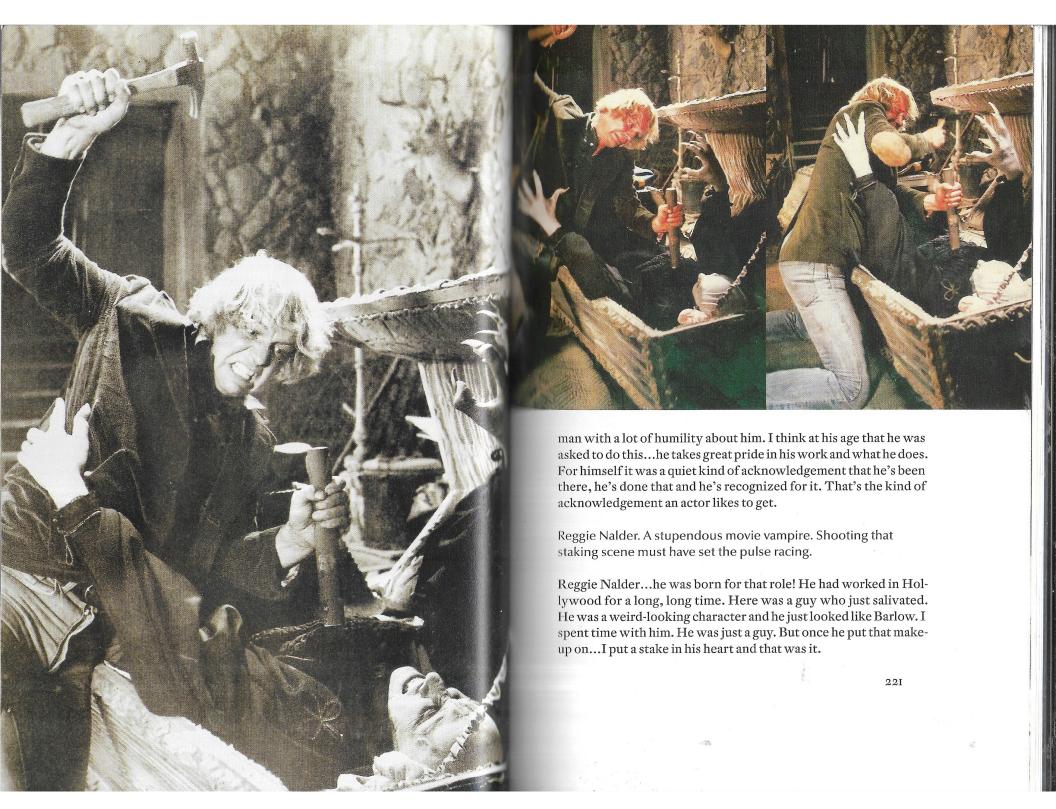
actor playing at acting—and this guy walks in. I remember the first scene in the shop. I don't remember why it was such an impactful moment but I was in awe of this guy. It sort of worked for me and helped me, because I could take that and put it into what I was doing. [The shop scene] was the first scene in which I worked with James. It fits in with what we're talking about because when we walked on I thought, "Oh my Christ, I'm working with James Mason." James just sort of took the lead. I spent a lot of time in his Winnebago. His daughter Portland was there. We had dinner sometimes together. He was a very ordinary, decent guy.

What impressed you about Mason the performer? Was his the kind of career that you wanted for yourself?

I know very little about the business of the business, and I've never fashioned myself after anybody. My career's really an accidental career. I know very little about the business that I'm part of. It's not my thing. I studied to be a political science teacher so I'm much more interested in events and what's happening in the world. I love acting and I love directing. I love the process of making a film-bringing people together to make something happen. That really excites me. But the discussion, I could never do that because it doesn't interest me. I react to people like James Mason in a visceral way-recognizing him as someone who has contributed enormously to my vision to the potential possibilities of film. The kind of characters that he did, you believed them. He wasn't the greatest actor in the world but he had a kind of presence that touches you. That's how he affected me. Also I could recognize, as I said before, the way in which he approached things: very economical. Very nice power.

Did he say anything about working on this particular project?

I think he enjoyed it. I'd like to think he enjoyed it but I never really asked him about it. I think he relished the role. He was also a



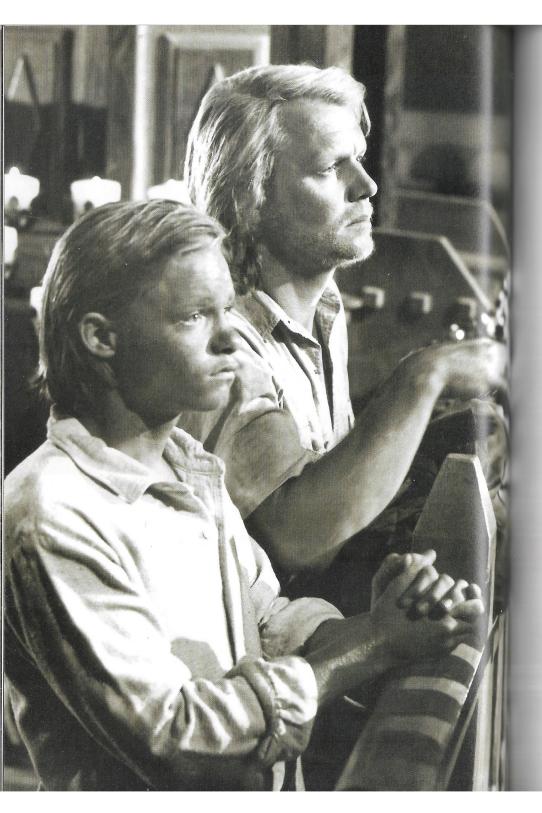
What are your memories of working with the other actors: Lew Ayres, Elisha Cook, Lance Kerwin, Marie Windsor, Geoffrey Lewis? I suppose they drifted in and out of the plot.

Bonnie was having a thing with Tobe. We hung out for a while together and then she and Tobe took off. Lance Kerwin was my kid brother. He was the kid I look after. You had Mason and Soul. and then Kerwin. It was like a feeding cycle—one looks up to the other up to the other. Lance was a lovely guy, a very sweet boy and we got on very well. Geoffrey was an old friend of mine. I'd met him partly through Clint Eastwood. Geoffrey did a lot of television. Also he and I shared a passion for skiing, so we'd go skiing together. George Dzundza became a very good friend and then drifted away. It's part of what it is—very intense relationships and friendships for a short period of time. It's like myself, Antonio Fargas and Paul Glaser, we're still very close friends. I talk to Paul every other week and have for 20 years. I've been through all the stuff with him and his wife when she died. Then his daughter died and his son is in remission. He's remarried, has a child. And Antonio is doing what he's doing. I talked to him yesterday. But generally speaking it's funny. It's one of the reasons why it's so difficult to remember things because there are so many intense moments and you don't have a chance to review or re-look. They are moments of passion for the time that you have them. Then you move on and something else takes its place. It's just the nature of the beast.

Your character, Ben Mears, comes to 'Salem's Lot to write about the old house. He finds more than he bargained for and almost loses his reason, but he's already unbalanced when he arrives, isn't he?

Jeez, I haven't really thought about it for such a long time. I may not remember. It is in a way a kind of metaphor—when you're obsessed with something from an early age and you're drawn to seek out an answer in life. In a way [it's a form of absolution], and it's





true: when he drives the stake through Barlow's heart his life is colder. That's what it was; now how do you fill it up? What makes him crazy is the obsession. He doesn't have to look into the eyes to be crazed.

There was a sequel, but without your character.

It was horrible.

The story in *Salem's Lot* is told ultra-straight. There are no laughs here, unlike today, when it would be tongue in cheek. It was genuinely frightening, and raised the bar for TV horror. Was it everything you wanted it to be?

Oh God, yes. Absolutely. Then again we are talking about this reflectively. When I saw the film it was more than what I'd read. It was better—the *film* was *better*. It was just so well prepared, so well put together.

Why was it so effective? Was it because it was set in a contemporary setting without the gothic trappings of a Hammer horror movie?

I suppose so, yes. What Stephen King did was [take] a genre that we all have our preconceptions of...[and incorporated ordinary characters like] the cop and the real estate agent. That's why Ferndale was so important, because the town looks just like it, plus the magnificent structure of one of those houses in that town. So in Ferndale [the Marsten House] does exist. It's a beautiful town, really. The Marsten House is built with that New England architecture, so the architecture is all New England [even though it was filmed in California].

You come from a religious background — brother a minister, father a religious affairs adviser. Any opinions from your family when you took the film, and any second thoughts of your own?

No.

You said some of the sense of evil reminded you of faith healing experiences from your youth. Can you explain?

Did I say that? That's interesting, and probably true. I come from a part of the country where the Pentecostal tradition of faith healing is really part of the religious experience. "If you have the faith, brother, you can be healed." It's the elixir salesman kind of thing, which is really American—the Baptist minister, Elmer Gantry thing. There was a money scam about a guy, and this is peculiar to that middle part of the country, who said he was sent by God and milked his people out of millions and millions and millions of dollars. This is so built into the fiber [of life]. And in a way there are reverse overtones of that implicit in *Salem's Lot*. It's the power of suggestion, of belief or faith.

Did you meet Stephen King?

I think I did. I think he came to the set once. I tell you something: the thing that scared me the most in that film was the kid coming through the window. It was like every other day on the set: the crew shows up, coffee is being poured, people are yapping, they're starting to gasp at the stunt and trying to figure out how they're going to do this. They come up with the idea of harnessing this guy - putting him in a harness at the end of a boom or crane, and then just backing the crane up against the window. This is like hi-tech special effects-it's supposed to scare the shit out of you. A little dry ice down there, water on the dry ice up along the window, set a camera this side of the window, back the crane up, with this kid attached, to the window. Scared the living shit out of me! But it's so simply. so simply done, which is one of the things I loved about this film and why it had such an impact. It's a lesson about creative preparation, simplicity and economy - all of these things that work. You find in an actor, like with James Mason, that the whole approach

to this thing was the eyes, the sit-up [in the coffin]...they were so simple but powerful. But it scares the shit out of you. People say, "Why do we have to go to such an extent—to throw in the kitchen sink?" I'll tell you: it's careful, well-chosen moments, put in the right place, well-shot, using the magic of the camera itself. Here's an empty space and, all of a sudden, whoosh! Remember when we turn around and there's that pile of stuff on the floor—that thing in the kitchen? That's just terrifying.

The people who worked on *Alien* were sometimes scared to go onto the set alone. Any feelings of that on *Salem's Lot*?

No. The interior sets of the Marsten House were very spooky but it wasn't really that spooky until they lit it. Then it really became eerie and weird. But I never really had a problem with that. The only place that was really ghoulish was the interior of the Marsten House and the basement room where the people were. The rest of it was everyday, wasn't it?

The setpiece scenes: the fight with the female vampire in the morgue; the staking of Barlow; the moment when you turn and meet James Mason and he says "Good evening." What do you recall of shooting those, and which others stick in your mind?

I think "Good evening," probably. Two simple, little words. It's classic—you can't get more classic than that. I'd like to have done that scene again, personally. I don't know why. I just remember not being satisfied with that scene when I did it. There are other choices that I could have made but I don't remember what they could have been.

Did it require a Brit to play that villain?

That's absolutely right. I can't imagine anybody but James Mason doing it.

There isn't a single bad performance in *Salem's Lot*. Do you agree?

I guess the only one that I really question is my own! You get to know yourself so well but it's the way others see you, not the way you see yourself. Most times I kind of enjoy watching myself because I put it in the third person. That way I can look at it, but it's him, not me. If I can look at it in that frame of mind, then I'm okay. On this one I very much liked the opening of the film and I liked walking into the rooming house. I liked the mystery of the set-up very much. I enjoyed watching that, and the first introductions. Then you get into the meat of the picture and there I'm always much more critical of myself. I liked the set-up [of my character] very much.

It's become a benchmark of TV horror. What do you think of it now? Are you proud of it? It still retains the power to frighten -22 years on.

As a participant in the film I'm very proud of it. The job of an actor is to be part of a puzzle and your vocation is to fulfill the intention of the film. If that's successful, and your part of that collaboration works, then I'm very pleased. There's nothing worse than seeing yourself stick out in a very bad film. It doesn't matter that you gave 100 per cent of your effort—it's still a shit film. It's really an awful feeling. But if you look at something as overall as I did on this film I can forgive a lot of the little things that I wish I'd done differently because the film works and it's proved the test of time. It's a real classic.

Why has it stood the test of time?

Because of all the things we talked about. First of all I think the basic premise is real strong: this obsession with something out of your childhood and going to suss it out—to find out what it is. That's a very strong one. We, the audience, don't even know what it is,

but there's something driving this guy from the get-go. That's an interesting place to be. We discover with him [although] he already knows what evil lurks, but he doesn't know what it is yet. The audience thinks there's something wrong with this guy. And that's important—how driven he is. The impeccable, simple preparation was another reason. And I think the simplicity of the film itself, and then the casting of the film is so good. Those are three reasons why the film is as good as it is and has borne the test of time. It's hard to say that these days because in our filmmaking process there's a superficiality that drives the films. The performances and performers [in *Salem's Lot*] were unique, the music was simple and clear. Today the music is manufactured, it's thin. I'm being pejorative there but the same thing is true of film: instead of clarity, simplicity and the strength of something that drives a film emotionally we opt for pretending.

Do you believe today's filmmakers try to overwhelm audiences to the extent that acting and the script are forgotten?

Yeah, though there are always exceptions. Generally, though, I do think that. I think we're throwing everything but the kitchen sink in there, saying "What more can I do?" or "How am I going to make these special effects different?"

Did you eventually read the book?

No. I read portions of it while I was doing it but I didn't finish it. The thing that made these films last is that they struck the right chord and the right elements were put together in a way that, ultimately, it was the simplicity that made them so effective. It could be the most complex story in the world but there's a simple, clear line [to follow].



XII

"Look at Me, Teacher!"

An Interview with Geoffrey Lewis

TONY EARNSHAW

Salem's Lot came at a time when your career was really taking off. Your relationship with Clint Eastwood had begun, you were working with Steve McQueen, and you were constantly in demand on TV. What was your reaction to the offer of doing Salem's Lot?

The story was a classic, as we both know. I was interested in working with Tobe Hooper and I just wanted to do the movie. I didn't make a lot of money for it—that wasn't the impetus. It just looked like something I would enjoy doing, and I did.

Had you read the original novel?

No I didn't, and I still haven't.

What was your reaction on reading the part of Mike Ryerson?

Interview conducted January 31, 2007. (A truncated version of this interview originally appeared in an article in *Cinema Retro*, volume 3, issue 9 [2007]).

Iliked the idea of the transformation, and he seemed the least likely to be a scary guy or a monster. That was one of the great things about that movie: there were no monsters, no bad guys or anything, no blood. They didn't have any of that. I liked the idea of the transformation of a guy from human to inhuman. I was interested in doing that and interested in seeing what I could do with it [in terms of] the change from a human being to another kind of being. So that's what I was interested in.

Your character Mike Ryerson is depicted as being slightly detached from the rest of the town. He spends a lot of time with the dead. But he's a decent, hard-working guy. What was the bigger part of the job: establishing his character or playing the vampire?

Both. The character is a pretty common fellow, a regular guy, even though he was kind of a loner. That's always hard to do—somebody who doesn't have any outstanding things about him. Then we got to the part when he was transformed into a vampire, and that was interesting. I wanted to see what I could do with that. The eyes, of course, were one thing, and then it's just the physicality of something that is unearthly. It's kind of fun to do it.

There are many scary moments in *Salem's Lot* but many people point to you, freshly vampirised, sitting in the rocking chair. It's a hell of a scene. How do you get into the mindset of doing it seriously?

Sitting in the rocking chair. "Look at me, teacher," he says. I put a lot of attention on what he sounds like. Also, the eyes and stuff like that. I don't know, I just played it the way I thought—he's just your garden variety vampire—rather than do anything really outlandish with it. That's about all.

Was there a certain attraction to playing a vampire — and a proper vampire, done with seriousness and intent to frighten?

Oh yeah. I think any inhuman being is kinda fun for an actor. I had to [think] "How do I move? How do I talk?" It's not your regular guy. I tell you what we did with the eyes. You know the gels on a light? What they did was take gels and insert them in the eye socket. I could only use them for about two minutes at a time. But when the light hits you, it reflects, so it looks like there's an interior light. That was just a technical thing. The guy seemed to be ethereal, too.

So you weren't wearing contact lenses?

No. It was a different kind of lens. You could hardly see through it and you could only put them on for about three minutes, then they took them out. That was true of everybody there who used those kinds of eye covers.

Richard Kobritz said there was never any doubt in his mind that he would cast you. He'd worked with you previously on a film called *Moon of the Wolf.* He also said that you were the only person in *Salem's Lot* to attempt a Maine accent. Is that what you remember too?

I do. I actually grew up in New England until about ten, but I never had that accent. The New England and the Australian accent are, I think, the hardest. British is pretty easy and I've seen Englishmen do American accents that were spot-on. But the New England or Maine accent is a little tricky, as is the Australian.

Talk me through your memories of some scenes. Do you have memories of those key sequences?

I do have [memories of] the rocking chair and jumping into the grave. I remember that well. A lot of times I'll just try to get the character going and just follow him. I don't mean to sound esoteric or anything but you make something up—a way of walking, you're upset over something—and you just kind of take off with it and let go with the character. As long as the director doesn't get in the way and if he does, you just push him out of the way, right?

You were a solid part of a great cast, sharing scenes with David Soul, Lew Ayres, George Dzundza and Barney McFadden. Was that also part of the attraction? And did everyone buy into the concept?

The only person I knew was David. I didn't know anybody other than him. I knew of some of the other people, such as Lew Ayres and certainly James Mason, although I had nothing to do with them. They were certainly an added boost. The whole production had a certain class to it, I thought.

Was that something engendered by Richard Kobritz and Tobe Hooper?

I would assume so. I would think so. Tobe was a funny fellow. He wouldn't talk much and he would drink about two dozen Coca-Colas a day. He was wired but he still had a vision. He knew what he wanted to see because it certainly comes out through the screen. The thing with horror movies and comedies, you just try to stay as real as you can. Then the situation will pay off better than if you try to incite a certain way of looking at something or incite certain emotions. Just play it for what it is, for what it's worth.

Richard Kobritz and Tobe Hooper set out to make a serious horror movie, albeit one destined for TV. Was that a rare thing back then?

Yes, it was, but I also think it is one of the major horror movies. Even though there's no blood or "splat"—where people get their throats cut and all this stuff—we don't see any of that. And you don't need it. The thing is scarier because of it. I've met several people—12 or 15 people—along the way who have said that my character scared them more than anything. One guy said that when he was a little kid, his mother would say, in order to get him to do something, "I'm going to get Mike Ryerson after you!"

I was one of those kids too. When the show was broadcast in the UK I was 14.

Oh, okay. You were ripe for horror!

And moments from the show have stayed with me: Mike Ryerson being one, the boy scratching at the window being another.

That got me. Oh yeah, that was sinister. It was just frightening.

Why do you think that was?

There's something about people floating. He's got the eyes and he looks a little scary, but he's not *standing* on anything. So it's already otherworldly in a very worldly situation. He's outside the window, he's dressed like a little boy, but he's obviously got some supernatural thing going on there.

You'd worked with David Soul earlier on an episode of *Starsky* and *Hutch*. Here he was headlining a major TV miniseries. How did he deal with it all, and had he changed in the interim?

No, he hadn't. He's one of the few people I've met over the years who I was doing television with early on. He always seemed to be the old David. He didn't put on airs, unlike me. I, of course, used a cigarette holder...I'm joking.

What direction did Tobe give you when performing the horror sequences?

None. [He was] very unobtrusive. I don't recall him doing anything other than telling me where the camera was. He seemed to trust me to do what needed to be done. He would let it go at "Stand here, look there." Something like that, but nothing about what makes the guy live and breathe.

Is that the kind of direction you prefer?

It is, and it's the kind I seem to wind up with anyway. I don't mind talking about a scene or somebody if they're having trouble. I did seven films with Clint Eastwood, five of which he directed, and he only gave me one direction. I had just done a scene and it was awful. It was terrible, and everybody knew it. It was way off the mark. He came over to me and said "You wanna do that again?" and that was it.

Had you acted in this type of horror project before?

No, I hadn't and subsequently never did one after. Is that what you're asking? Until it got to *The Devil's Rejects*.

How does Salem's Lot stack up?

I think it's a milestone. A couple of times I've been asked to go to these horror conventions, and it's amazing how many people point that out as being a good scary movie.

What do you remember of the sequence where Ryerson jumps into the grave and opens the coffin?

It was a box. They had the one in the cemetery but this one was for the interior of the grave. It was just a box with dirt in it and on it. It was a really simple thing but it was certainly sufficient [for the effect]. I jumped into the grave and had to put my throat in a certain position where he [Brad Savage] could get at it without too much bending and flopping around. As an actor I assisted him in doing it but as a character I had to kind of resist it.

And what of crawling towards the open cellar door as Lance Kerwin cowers in terror — the slow methodical movements build the horror.

Well, I'll tell you what was going on. They dirtied the cellar up and they put in rotten potatoes. I don't know if you've smelled rotten potatoes but it is one of the worst, most offensive smells. It's just an awful thing. My motivation in that scene was just to get out of that cellar! [Laughs].

Barbara Babcock, playing Lance Kerwin's mother, has said she was in awe of James Mason.

I met him [Mason]. I wasn't in awe of him but he was certainly a classy gentleman. I didn't spend any time with him. We didn't work on the same days. I just happened to be there once; said hello to him and that was it. He was one of the giants.

Was it ever creepy working on the film or was it just another job?

That's an interesting question. Now that you mention it I may have been a little creeped out once or twice. I don't recall any specifics. Basically it was just hitting my marks and telling the truth.

Everyone played it for real — no giggles.

No, not at all. It's all real life.

Do you have any particular memories of filming on location in Ferndale?

I do, because growing up in New England and then this movie being set in New England, Ferndale and Eureka, also in northern California, are like being in Maine. As a matter of fact we would be filming and invariably you'd say to one of your friends, "When I get back to California..." and there we were in California. It was so foreign to southern Californians—like two different places. I thought it had the same feeling as the New England town that was depicted in the movie.

How long would you have been on the film?

Three or four weeks, I believe.

Are you surprised it has attained this cult status? Why do you think that is?

Well, I am and I'm not. In relation to other horror films I've seen, some of the newer ones just don't carry off the scariness. They just get horror, murder and mayhem, like *The Devil's Rejects*. There's nothing really scary there. But to put the fear of the supernatural, of forces that we don't see, [into people], I thought [Tobe] did really well with that, extremely well. That, I think, is the scariest thing—what you don't see. Even the vampires were man-like and then they're not that—they float in the air.

Do you believe that "less is more"?

Yes, especially in that. If you want a murder and mayhem movie, that's one thing. But if you want a scary movie I think 80 or 90 per cent of it takes place in between the scene or away from the actual activity.

Richard Kobritz always said he wanted his cast to think they were making a feature rather than a TV movie.

It definitely had that feel to it—that it was a movie-movie. It felt like he was covering all the bases. It wasn't a drive-by television show. It had some meat to it. We'd get into the situations and play them through more like you do in a movie than you do on television. In television you just take those shots that are necessary to move the picture along. You're gonna do that in a movie too, but in a movie you have more selection because you take more time.

What was your reaction when you saw the finished film? Are you especially proud of your work on it?



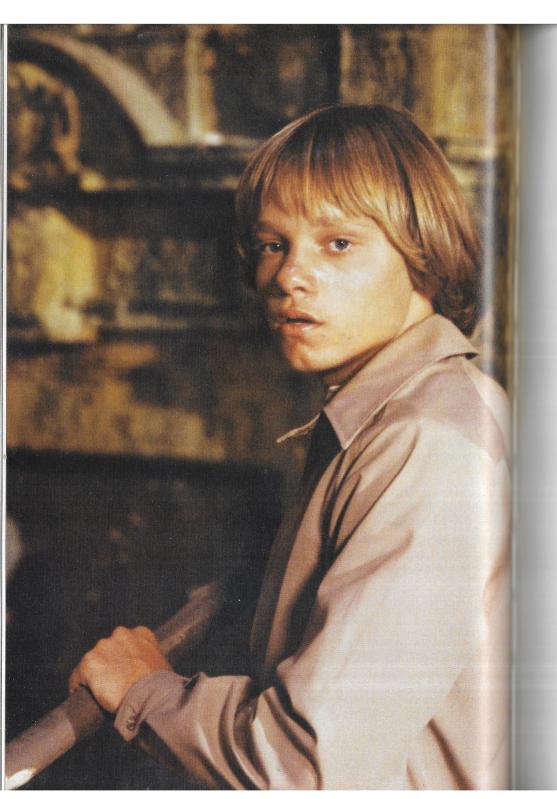
I don't get into the "Jeez, I should've done this or that." I mean, I do of course; you get a little critical but not to the extent that I would wanna change anything or insist that something be changed. Not at all.

Do you look back on it as something special or was it just another job?

Well, it turned out to be something special. I looked on it as another job. Then I realized shortly after finishing the film that we had done something and done it well.

What do you have to say to all these kids that you've terrorized over the years?

Usually I give them a taste of the vampire..."Look at me, teacher!"



XII

High Budget Horror:
An Interview with Lance Kerwin
RANDY WAAGE

I just watched Salem's Lot last night and you were good in it.

That was a lot of fun. It was a neat experience for me because it had a high budget for a TV produced movie. The director Tobe Hooper was the director of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. They worked at a feature film pace instead of a TV pace. I was primarily a TV actor so it was a neat experience to work at that pace, to take your time, and do it over. They let me be involved in blocking of some of the scenes and directing little second unit stuff.

Was that filmed in Los Angeles, too?

It was filmed at Warner Bros. and then in Northern California. A place called Ferndale.

At the time many kids considered that one of the spookiest movies they had ever seen.

(This interview originally appeared on www.retrocrush.com)

I had a lot of family in Hawaii at the time and they're pretty tough over there. Some of the kids were sleeping in their parents' bed because they were scared by the movie.

The boys hovering outside the windows ... creepy stuff.

It's really even hard to tell the flow of the film. It was a miniseries originally, then we shot a feature film version for Europe at the same time. They've edited and cut together so much. How many tapes did you watch?

I watched a DVD and I think it was cut/edited down. What about David Soul of *Starsky and Hutch* fame? No singing on the set?

He was serious. He was trying to do a good job. He was into it. I remember he was like, "All right! Let's figure this out!" He wanted to make sure his motivation was correct. He played the character straight and strict.

What about James Mason?

What an opportunity to work with him. He was from the old school. He had a sense of humor nobody expected. He was funny.



Black Drapes and Porno Dolls:
An Interview with Joshua Bryant
TONY EARNSHAW

You were a familiar face to American audiences from your TV work in the late 1970s. How did the *Salem's Lot* job come to you?

I'd been doing television for a while; I did more after *Salem's Lot* but I was just beginning to work regularly. I was rehearsing a play at the time [*Sea Marks*, by the 1950s TV star Gardner McKay, in Los Angeles] and the call for [*Salem's Lot*] came in as something they would be happy to work around me for. Or maybe I was performing the play. But I had to be either at rehearsal or in performance at a certain time and wasn't available all the time. So they were happy to do that. They paid me well; they didn't give me very good billing, I recall that much. And that's probably why, after the vampire bops [the parents'] heads together, you only see Barbara Babcock lying on the floor. You don't see me there because I was off, probably, to the theatre. All I remember is that the agent called and said 'There's this job' and they probably mentioned David [Soul]. David and I had known each other for a while, and Barbara Babcock, who

This interview was conducted on March 28, 2013, exclusively for this book.

played my wife I had known for a while. She was a member of The Actors Studio so I knew her from there. Actually I knew a lot of people in that show. Almost everybody in there I worked with at some time or another in one way or another.

Had you been available for more of the production would they potentially have given you a bigger role?

I have no idea. My sense of it was that they had lost somebody or not been able to get somebody and they called my agent at the last moment. I had nothing to do with it. I didn't meet the producers; I didn't go in to talk to anybody about it. They said "Do you want to do this?" and I said "Sure. What are they paying?"

Had you seen the script?

Definitely not. I've never been a fan of horror films or stories. I've never liked to be frightened in that way. I was not a Stephen King fan. There was one story I loved by Stephen King, and I've read two or three.

What was the one that you liked?

I don't remember the name of it [*Quitters, Inc*] but it's about a man who wanted to stop smoking, and they cut your wife's fingers off if you don't stop. I thought that was a kicker. But I'm just not a fan of horror stuff. My wife is very much. We both saw *Salem's Lot* for the first time yesterday. She enjoyed it.

Some actors don't like to watch themselves on screen for a whole variety of reasons. Are you one of them?

I'm in that category and I'm not a big television fan anyway. I don't watch any television at all these days. The only time we have the set on is when we're watching a film.

In reconnecting with this TV movie from 1979, what did you think of it?



What did I think of it? Gosh. Well, it didn't frighten me, I don't know why. I have several friends who had seen it and who had mentioned it over the years, repeatedly as a matter of fact. Most people like it very much. I enjoyed it. It was great to revisit it and revisit my part in it. I didn't even remember a couple of the scenes that I was in. All I remembered was the kitchen scene. But I enjoyed it. It was great to see David again. It was great to see all those folks, some of whom are dead by now, surely. I'm 72 myself.

Ted Petrie is an average, ordinary, small-town guy. He's a hard-working husband and father, he doesn't really understand his son, and there's a little bit of awkwardness there between the boy and the father. You're not given that much to work with in terms of lines and scenes but you come across as many dads do: there's not much of a connection between him and his son. Given the paucity of the role how did you make him plausible?

[Laughs] I don't know how to answer that question. As always you just try to establish a character in some way using what's given to you in the script and sometimes what the director supplies to help you in addition. Given what you have to say you try to back it up with facts in the character's life, which you invent and which make sense, and which give you a basis for speaking a line truly, that's all. And if the lines are well-written and it's a good script then they usually come out well.

Lance Kerwin, who was quite a big teen star at the time, played your son.

He was a coming actor, I remember that. I hadn't met him before and I don't know much about him. We didn't have much to do with each other except for that scene or two. He was a nice enough kid.

If there's a distance between the father and son it's probably best that you didn't get to know him.

Probably so. I don't remember spending any time together with him at all. Surely we did talk and people do on a set. Generally sets are quite congenial and this set was. Everyone was friendly. But there was an age difference so I didn't have much to talk to him about nor he me. I was thrilled to meet James Mason, I recall. David [Soul] and I were good acquaintances. I'm not sure that he was on the set the day the kitchen scene was shot. I didn't even remember doing the graveside scene and only vaguely the stuff in the bedroom [with Lance Kerwin].

There is another scene in the film in which the Petries are discussing their son's seeming non-reaction to the death of his friend. Neither can understand it and yet you as the father defend him. Again, you are delivering quite an amount of character and understanding of these people with not very much. Did you have time to rehearse it?

They shot this film pretty quickly. I doubt we had much rehearsal. We may have run through it once or twice but that would have been it. How to put this: it's television. What you often have to do in television since there is so little time – time is a great deal of money – is generalise, in a way. Oftentimes in television characters are stereotypes, if you will, and these people were those kinds of stereotypes. What made this different is that the kid is into the occult and that sort of thing, which is slightly different. Most people though neither Barbara nor I were parents at that time – understand the difficulties between parents and children. Even if you're not a parent you have been a child so you understand how that goes. And that's what we used. We just played it simply. Probably neither of us had very many specifics to back it up. We just played those general things, which is, I'm sorry to say, very often how you have to do it in television. There's not time to get more deeply into it. It's a sad fact of life in television work that you often have to make choices like that. The scripts are not deep, if you will – certainly not in character development. The producers don't budget time for rehearsal, the directors don't have time to rehearse the actors very often, so one reason they hire you is, they know you'll get it right quickly. My contract with Salem's Lot couldn't have been more than a week, I shouldn't think.

What are your memories of Barbara Babcock, who played your screen wife?

Wonderful woman, terrific actress. I only knew her as an actress and saw some ofher work at The Actors Studio; it was always good. I liked her very much. I saw her from time to time over the years in one thing or another. You run into people time and again, particularly in television where people tend to work with each other over and over again.

One of the things that David Soul talked about at length was James Mason. He had several key scenes with him and he said, "I absolutely adored the man." What are your memories of James Mason?

He was a very accessible and engaging fellow. Everyone of my generation was in awe of James Mason, of course, because he was an icon. I found Mr Mason to be wonderful to talk to. He was a great guy, had a wonderful smile, and the day that I was working and meeting him — maybe the only day that I worked that he was on the set — was in the kitchen scene. I don't know what he was doing there or what else they were shooting before or after that but he stopped by. Everyone swam around him, of course, because those who didn't know him wanted to meet him. He took on everybody and was very gracious. Another fellow who was interesting to meet on the same day — he was in a subsequent scene although I didn't see him once he was made up — was the fellow who played the vampire.

That was Reggie Nalder.

He showed up around the same time that day. Like Mr Mason he was a tremendously likable guy. The director Tobe [Hooper] made a point of mentioning this to me. He said "You're gonna like this fellow when he comes", I guess because he was sofrightening when he was in make-up and the part he was playing was so far away from who he actually was. Indeed I liked him. So did everybody.

The climactic kitchen scene involving the Petrie family and the priest is set up almost like a poltergeist haunting. There are some special effects going on, the lights flicker on and off, the light bulb explodes... then the vampire appears. How was that scene shot and what were the mechanics of delivering it?

You remember the moment when the vampire blows through the window and there's a blob on the floor, which moves and rises and morphs into the vampire? The second part of it is somebody under a black drape and they stand up. But the first part of it when there's a blob on the floor which begins to move and then a bulbous form comes under it... they put a porno doll under that black drape and blew it up! That's how that worked. It was the first porno doll I'd

ever seen. [Laughs]. I was trying to remember as I was watching it how they made the house shake. They could have had the set – the floor – on rollers or they could have had crew behind just shaking the walls. It looked to me like the floor was moving. If that were the case then the floor was on some foundation that moved, probably wheels, then they'd have crew outside the walls just moving it. I don't think there was any machinery involved as there is sometimes in the theatre [when you] have it mechanically rigged. I don't think they had that. It must have been manually done. But it was a helluva thing. Even on the day I do remember sitting in the chair, turning around, looking over my shoulder and thinking, "Wow, this is pretty good." There was a helluva racket and then the house moved pretty well.

Was it exciting to do a scene like that or was it just a job?

It was just a job. I was much more interested in the play I was doing. I started out as a theatre actor; I went into television for the money. And of course a play is much more demanding in every single way than a television gig is, as a rule. It's always exciting to go to work. Actors go from job to job, you never know when one job's going to be your last. So it's always exciting to get a new job and to get to do it. Most actors are not good businesspeople so the business of it is a total drag. Then when you get the job and go and do your work it's always a joy. I'm sure virtually every actor in the world feels that. Any time they're working they're glad they're having a good time. I was no different, certainly on this job or any other for that matter. It was a great experience and I liked those people very much. I don't remember much about Tobe except I thought he was a terrific guy. Having so many friends and acquaintances on a shoot, and meeting I ames Mason, all of that just made it great.



XV

Dramatic. Mysterioso. Classical:
An Interview with Susan Sukman McCray
TONY EARNSHAW

The producer of *Salem's Lot*, Richard Kobritz, was extremely complimentary about your father, composer Harry Sukman, and his work on the show. Richard always felt that *Salem's Lot* was really a movie — a feature film — as opposed to a TV special, and he gathered around him people who had experience and expertise in that field. Your father was one of them.

My father and Richard became good friends and respected each other very much. When my father came up with an idea for a cue or a theme he would call Richard to come over so he could share it with him. Invariably, whatever my dad would play put a smile of what I call admiration and delight on Richard's face.

Your father had worked with Richard Kobritz on *Someone's Watching Me* prior to their collaboration on *Salem's Lot*. Can you tell me something about their relationship? I presume Richard was a fan.

Interview conducted January 6, 2007. (Extracts of this interview originally appeared in an article in *Cinema Retro* magazine.)

Yes, my father scored the Movie of the Week Someone's Watching Me. As I recall, Richard was a big fan of Frank Sinatra. My father knew and worked with Frank. He scored the Sinatra film The Naked Runner in England. It was a Warner Bros. picture. When the head of the music department, an old friend of my father's, Danny Gould, suggested my father to Mr Kobritz, the reaction was very positive. Not only because my father had won an Oscar and been nominated by that time. My father came in to meet with Richard and when he entered the office, he was greeted with the same name Frank Sinatra nicknamed him which was "Hersh," pronounced hairsh. They both laughed and became fast friends.

What do you know about the brief your father was given for the music for *Salem's Lot*? Was he left to his own devices or did he work to a specific request for a certain style of music from Kobritz or others at Warner Bros?

My father read the script and had an immediate thought as to how he wanted to approach the project. Dramatic—mysterioso—and classical. It was all left up to him and I think that's a good thing!

It's a phenomenal score — really atmospheric, heart-pounding and suitably gothic with a contemporary edge. Can you recall your father's work on it — and perhaps where he drew his inspiration from?

He drew his inspiration from the classics. I know when scoring Someone's Watching Me—the first piece he thought of was composed by Vivaldi. He actually used the piece in the film as well. Though Salem's Lot was dark and needed that kind of music, there was a beautiful love theme in it as well—the theme for Bonnie Bedelia's character. My father always felt each character in a film should have its own theme. Then that theme would be incorporated in the score so the character was actually identified by his piece of music.

How did he operate as a composer? Did he work from home or a studio?

My father composed his music and seemed to have more inspiration at home. He had a "back room" with an upright piano that he would sit at [for] hours at a time. He would awake in the middle of the night with an idea in his head and would promptly write it down on a piece of music paper he would keep at his bedside. When he would awake in the morning after going back to sleep, he would take the paper to his piano and play it. There was never a time a melody or a dramatic interlude didn't come to mind. He was truly a great musician/creator and a fabulous concert pianist and conductor. He favored the piano in many scores. He thought it was not only lovely to play for a theme but it could be very, very dramatic [when] played alone—like for a chase down a dark alley or even leading to a grand crescendo.

How long did he take to score the project? And why isn't it available on CD?

First let me say, I have received so many requests and questions about a CD or record available and I sadly have to say there is none. I wish Warner Bros. could delve into their archives and either rerecord or possibly take the music track and redub to release it. In the television business, [when] scoring a Movie of the Week or a series there is never a lot of time. A composer is always under the gun. In this case, as I recall, he was sent the script to get an idea of what he was going to see and work with. [The script is now in the Harry Sukman Foyer in Hartford, CT]. He then went in to Warner Bros. to see the film. I remember he called home right after seeing it and was very impressed. He came home and started to write themes for each character—which was the norm for him. He was told—and I think I remember this correctly—he had ten days before he had to score the picture at the studio. I believe there were two scoring sessions. I went to the first because I wanted to hear

the main title, which I thought would sound very exciting with a big orchestra. I, [just like] my father, had only heard him play it on the piano. When we arrived on the stage, my father noticed that the music mixer he had asked for, Danny Wallin, was not there. Danny was always known as the best and he was at Warner Bros. My father said, "I have to wait for Danny" which actually didn't take long; he was working on something else and was called over immediately. Danny brought that up to me the last time I saw him about a year ago. He said he was so flattered that my father would request, and wait, for him.

What was Warners' reaction? I assume they were thrilled. They should have been.

Danny Gould [of] Warner Bros. Music (who is still there) was thrilled and knew it would be great because he knew my father's work.

Similarly, what was your father's reaction to the Emmy nomination?

My father was very proud of the nomination. He felt he was, at least hoped, he was going to win because it was such a dramatic score for a television show. He was so proud, in fact, that he invited Richard Kobritz to the awards to be seated with us. When he lost, and he lost to a show not nearly as good, it was to a composer who had passed away that year. You can never beat someone who has died, my father said. He apologised to Richard for not winning.

It appears to have been his last piece composed for cinema or TV. If so, it's a heck of a score to finish on.

Salem's Lot was the last big score he composed. His last performance was as concert pianist on his birthday, December 2, 1984. After playing a Gershwin concert and taking a bow to a standing ovation, my father collapsed on stage of a heart attack as Frank Sinatra was

about to wheel out a birthday cake and sing Happy Birthday to him. Every year my father would perform *Rhapsody in Blue* in concert to benefit the Stroke Center in Palm Springs, California. Though he really didn't like Palm Springs, he drove there to appear for the charity. It was quite a shock.

What are your memories of that period and of watching your father at work scoring the picture in the studio?

My memories are of great pride and awe of watching someone with such great talent. Because he began his Hollywood career as staff pianist at Paramount Studios, he was beloved by the musicians who worked for him. He was one of them who had "made it" and besides that he was humble about it. He was a fine musician and an even finer man. Some of the work he has done is so underrated.

What were your father's thoughts on the finished two-part show of *Salem's Lot*? Was he happy with the way his work was presented?

He loved the way it turned out. The one thing that is always very difficult for a composer is when he goes into the booth on the scoring stage to hear a take—what he had just recorded to hear if it's okay. The sound is fabulous: they play it up and it's very impressive. When that same take is on the dubbing stage, things begin to change. The music isn't as pronounced, and played down for dialogue to the point even if there isn't dialogue you lose the musical drama. Then when it shows up on the small screen with a small speaker...depressing. However, in this case, my father was on the dubbing stage and because the music was so important to the film (drama, excitement, etc.) it was played up without getting lost. He was thrilled with that.







STEPHEN KING

AUTHOR OF THE SHINING AND THE DEAD ZONE

WITH 8 PAGES OF BLOOD-CHILLING PHOTOS

above Signet paperback, 1976.

right Signet movie tie-in edition, November 1979.

The ultimate in terror!

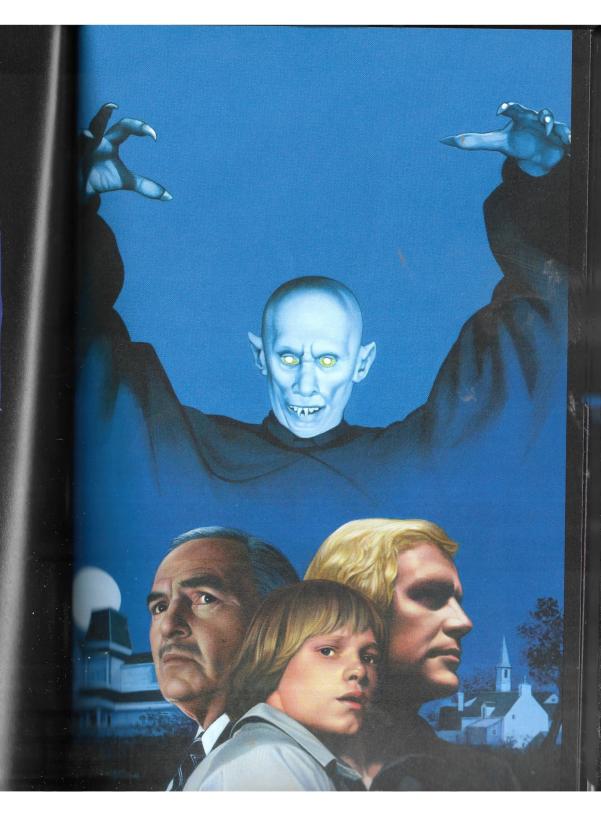


The Movie

"SALEM'S LOT" Starring DAVID SOUL JAMES MASON LANCE KERWIN BONNIE BEDELIA LEW AYRES

Produced by Executive Producer
RICHARD KOBRITZ STIRLING SILLIPHANT
Screenplay by Based on the Novel by
PAUL MONASH STEPHEN KING
Directed by
TOBE HOOPER

above Warner Brothers home video poster, 1982. right Roger Stine painting for Cinefantastique, 1979.



UNE SÉLECTION COLINE/OCÉANIC

LES VAMPIRES DE SALEM avec DAVID SOUL JAMES MASON LANCE KERWIN BONNIE BEDELIA LEW AYRES
produit pair RICHARD KOBRITZ producteur STIRLING SILLIPHANT

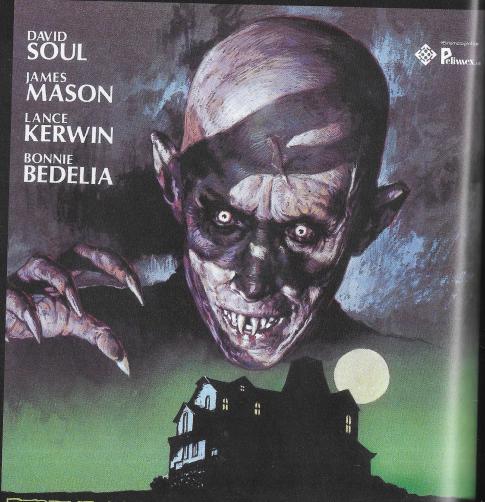
PAUL MONASH

CTEDUENIUM

mise en scene de

Spanish poster art for A Return to Salem's Lot. above French film poster, 1982.

Basada en les personajes de Stephen Kl



Basada en la novela "SALEM'S LOT" de Stephen King

con LEW AYRES · JULIE COBB · ELISHA COOK · GEORGE DZUNDZA · ED FLANDERS

Productor Ejecutivo: STIRLING SILLIPHANT Música: HARRY SUKMAN

Fotografía: JULES BRENNER Productor Asociado: ANNA COTTLE

Director: TOBE HOOPER

(c) Copyright WARNER BROS. INC.

 $above\ \ Stunning\ Spanish\ artwork\ but\ with\ a\ meaningless\ title\ change.$ right Italian poster art.



"LE NOTTI DI SALEM" CON DAVID SOUL - JAMES MASON LANCE KERWIN - BONNIE BEDELIA - LEW AYRES

PRODUTTORE ESECUTIVO

RICHARD KOBRITZ STIRLING SILLIPHANT

SCENEGGIATURA DI

TRATTO DAL ROMANZO DI

PAUL MONASH STEPHEN KING DISTORIALIA TOBE HOOPER

Technicolor 1980 WARNER BROS INC.





FROM THE AUTHOR OF CARRIE AND THE DIRECTOR OF TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE



LANGE KERWIN BONNIE BEDELIA LEW AYRES REGGIE NALDER

The Ultimate In Terror!

above Poster design by Rodolfo Reyes.

If Artwork by Peter Stanimirov.

following page Japanese poster.

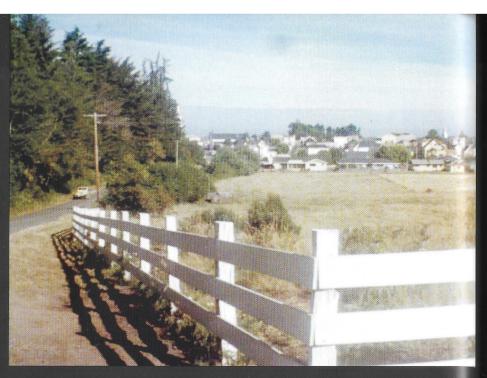


XVI

Photographs of Ferndale, California
JOHN SCOLERI

Back in July 2011, I read an article that mentioned *Salem's Lot* had been shot in Ferndale. I decided to do some research online to see if I could find details on the filming locations, and was pleasantly surprised to discover that several folks had posted videos and photos of a number of the locations. I also found Sean Clark's "Horror's Hallowed Grounds" article in *Horrorhound Magazine* that detailed how to get to most of the show's filming locations. I put together some notes and spent an afternoon wandering from spot to spot in Ferndale, first identifying and then trying to capture pictures of each location as it appeared in the film.

Fortunately Ferndale is a relatively small town, so it was not difficult finding and getting from one location to the next. Many of the locations had not changed drastically since the film was made. The biggest disappointment was clearly the fact that there is no Marsten House on the hill, so you have to use your imagination to envision what it must have looked like to passers-by when the façade was in place. But other spots remain untouched by time. The Ferndale Cemetery is a fascinating old cemetery that dates back to the late 1800s, with a winding drive through the heart of it. And to this day, you can almost imagine James Mason's Richard Straker walking down the steps of the location of Barlow & Straker Fine Antiques.



Ben Mears' Jeep approaching the Marsten House on his arrival in Salem's Lot. The fence on the road leading to the Marsten House location has been replaced since the film was shot.





The Marsten House sits atop Pabscutti Hill overlooking the town of Salem's Lot. As a suitable location for the Marsten House couldn't be found in Ferndale, a façade was built around an existing house by production designer Mort Rabinowitz (1920-1998).





The procession makes its way through Harmony Hill Cemetery for Danny Glick's funeral. The Ferndale Cemetery (established in 1868) looks nearly identical today.



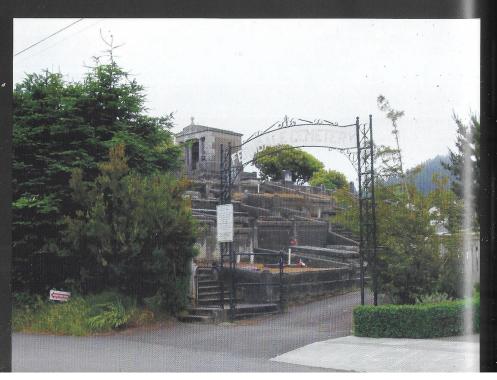
The view of Salem's Lot from atop Harmony Hill Cemetery. Though it has been repainted, the former church still stands out in the view from the Ferndale Cemetery.

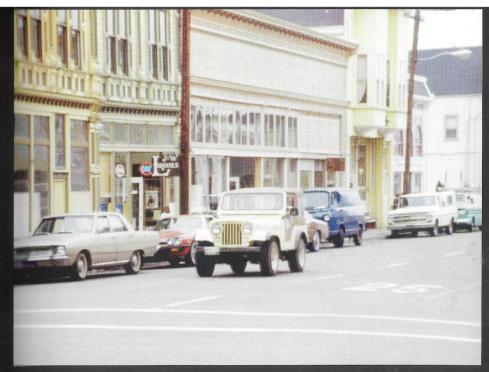






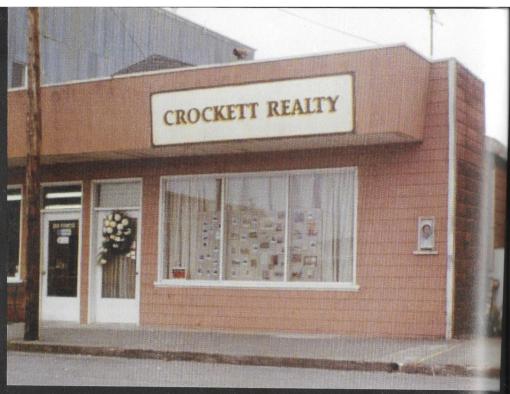
Ben Mears exiting the Harmony Hill Cemetery following Danny Glick's funeral. A Harmony Hill Cemetery sign was placed over the existing Ferndale Cemetery sign for filming.





Ben Mears drives his Jeep through downtown Salem's Lot. While the buildings on Main Street in Ferndale have since been repainted, they remain recognizable. The Liquor store sign seen in the film is still in use today.

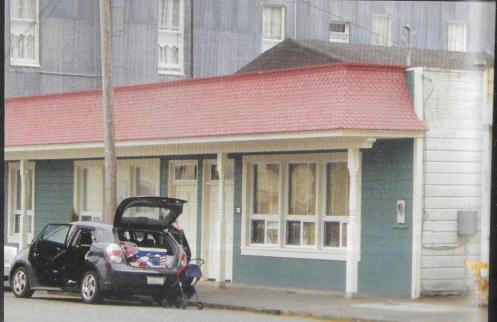




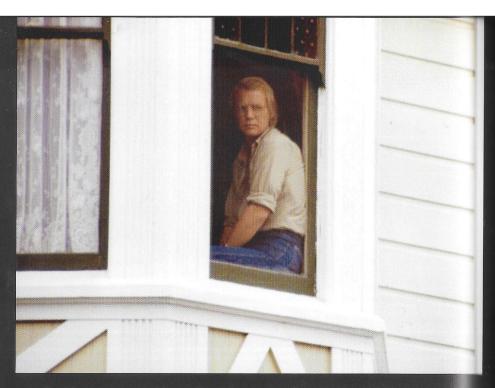
The office of Salem's Lot realtor Larry Crockett. The building is now the location where the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce meets weekly.



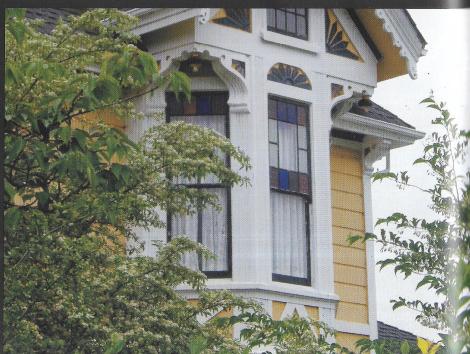
Ben Mears drives past a row of topiary trees. These Monterey Cypress trees have existed outside an historic Victorian home (the A. Berding House; also known as "The Gum Drop Tree House") for more than 130 years.







Ben Mears observes the Marsten House from his upstairs room in Eva Miller's Boarding House, While not directly visible from the upstairs window, the Marsten House location is actually in the direction the window faces.





Barlow & Straker Fine Antiques. Today the building is the home of the Ferndale Enterprise, the town's paper of record for 135 years.





Susan Norton arrives at Eva Miller's Boarding House. The four-bedroom, two-bath house used for the location was originally built in 1884.





Ben Mears gets holy water for their final assault on Barlow. Standing in for Father Callahan's St Andrews Catholic Church is Ferndale's Our Saviors Lutheran Church, founded in 1899.





Salem's Lot:

The Screenplay

The following pages reprint elements from the June, 1979 shooting script of *Salem's Lot*.

SALEM'S LOT

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. CROSS - DAY/NIGHT

1

The cross is silhouetted starkly against the setting sun. The sky is turning blood red at this sunset. We HEAR tinny Latin American MUSIC coming from some cantina. (We do not see the small town, but I promise you it is <u>remote</u>.)

SUPERIMPOSE: XIMICO, GUATEMALA

CAMERA PANS DOWN the facade of the church to pick up two figures. (We may SEE a couple of Indians or mestizos in the dusty area before the church.) They are -- and this should be indubitable -- outsiders, Americans, Yankees. A man and a boy. The man is BEN MEARS; he is in his mid-thirties. (And we'll refrain from describing him as "attractive in a masculine way" and get on with it.) The boy is MARK PETRIE; he is fifteen or sixteen, but there is a remarkable maturity about him. They are both wearing worn jeans and Indian sandals. A chill wind stirs the plane trees. Mark shivers and looks up at Ben. Shadow has captured the plaza before the church. Ben looks at the sky.

It is darkening rapidly. It does that down there. They hurry into the church.

2 INT. CHURCH - DAY/NIGHT

2

An Indian Sexton is turning on a couple of dim lights. Enough to see that the church is small, but old. Swarming with native attempts (under supervision) to paint Christs, madonnas, saints. As much gilt as could have been afforded. That certain traditional richness which (we know) contrasts with the poverty outside.

CAMERA FOLLOWS Ben and Mark down the aisle toward the altar. They drop to their knees, pray silently for 'some moments. The Indian Sexton merely glances at them; they seem familiars. Christ looks down benignly.

Now they go back toward the entrance to the church. At the font they fill small vials with holy water. The Sexton is there and a coin falls into his hand.

BEN

Father Rosario... Padre... where? Donde?

SALEM'S LOT

from the novel by Stephen King

Executive Producer
Stirling Silliphant

Producer

Richard Kobritz

Writer

Paul Monash

Director

Tobe Hooper

PROPERTY OF: WARNER BROS. TELEVISION 4000 Warner Boulevard Burbank, California 91522

SHOOTING SCRIPT

June 11, 1979

(CONTINUED)

7

CLOSE - VIAL

2	CONTINUED:	2
	The Sexton waves a vague hand at some distant place.	
	BEN Back tonight? Noche?	
	MARK Vuelva?	
	The Sexton shakes his head, again vaguely.	
	BEN We'll come back tomorrow. Manana.	
	He walks out of the church, followed by Mark.	
3	EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT	3
	A slight liberty. It has grown much darker. And windier. And chillier. The MUSIC is LOUDER. Distant VOICES are LOUDER.	
	Mark hunches against the chill. And then looks at the vial of holy water in his hand.	
4	CLOSE ON VIAL	4
	It is glowing, faintly.	
5	UP ANGLE - TWO SHOT	5
	Mark looks at Ben, who holds one of his own vials. It too is beginning to glow.	
	BEN They've found us again. Another one has found us again.	
	MARK We have to go further.	
	BEN Not yet.	
6	CLOSE - BEN	6

He looks down at the vial in his hand.

	The glowing holy water is beginning to bubble in the vial.	
	SLOW DISSOLVE TO	:
7A	EXT. FULL MOON - CLOSE - NIGHT	7A
	SLOW DISSOLVE TO	:
8	EXT. CHURCH - SILHOUETTED AGAINST FULL MOON - NIGHT	8
	SLOW MATCH DISSOLVE TO	:
9	OMITTED	9
10	EXT. MARSTEN HOUSE - SILHOUETTED AGAINST FULL MOON - NIGHT	10
	MAIN TITLES BEGIN.	
	UNDER THE LAST FEW CREDITS WE BEGIN	
	SLOW MATCH DISSOLVE TO	:
11	OMITTED	11
1.2	EXT. MARSTEN HOUSE - DAY	12
	SUPERIMPOSE: SALEM'S LOT - MAINE - TWO YEARS EARLIER	
	It's late spring and the sun falls flat on the Marsten House. We HEAR the SOUND of an APPROACHING CAR. The CAMERA PANS to meet it: a medium-priced model, far from new, driven by a man.	
1.3	BEN MEARS	13
	The driver. Just a little road-weary, but still neat, a man who dresses casually yet with some care. Dark glasses mask his eyes without making him the least bit sinister. We would buy a used car from him, but that's not his racket.	3

gets out of the car, looks around.

THE SQUARE 30

> Ben saunters slowly, as though aimlessly, along the sidewalks. He is observed with passing curiosity by some of the townspeople, most especially by PARKINS GILLESPIE, the town constable, a taciturn Yankee who has a master's degree in criminology which scarcely applies to his meagre town duties. He is in a cruiser with his deputy, a man about 30, name's NOLLY GARDENER,

31 BEN

> stops in front of the real estate office of LAWRENCE ("LARRY") CROCKETT.

32 STRAKER THROUGH WINDOW

also watches Ben, as:

33 BEN

enters the real estate office.

34 INT. CROCKETT'S OFFICE - DAY

> It is a long narrow office. In front sits Crockett's secretary, a flashy blonde of 24 or 25 named BONNIE SAWYER (with whom he has been having an intermittent affair). Toward the rear, Crockett sits at his rolltop desk. The office is barren and cheerless. But there are dozens of photographs of properties tacked to the

Bonnie pauses in her typing as Ben nods to her and passes to the rear, where Crockett looks up.

Mr. Crockett?

(as Crockett

nears) My name is Mears. Ben Mears. I'm

looking for a house to rent.

CROCKETT

For how long?

Six months, maybe.

STRAKER

40

41

BEN'S CAR

41

40

He turns to arrange some more bric-a-brac. Then he turns again, to look out the window, feeling something. And he sees:

It disappears around an edge of the square.

STRAKER'S POV - CROCKETT

42 -

coming out of the real estate office, moving along the square in his general direction.

43 GILLESPIE 43

intercepts Crockett, with:

GILLESPIE

'Afternoon, Larry.

CROCKETT

(pausing)

Parkins. How's the missus?

GILLESPIE

Complaining. Car's from Colorado.

CROCKETT

Is that where?

GILLESPIE

Long way from Maine. What did he want?

CROCKETT

Rent a house. Something fishy about him.

GILLESPIE

What?

CROCKETT

Can't say. Think he's lived here before. Knew Railroad Street.

GILLESPIE

He did? Summer visitor?

(CONTINUED)

43

49 CONTINUED: (2)

CROCKETT

Can't say. Can't put my finger on him. Looks all right, but still.

Can't rightly say. Sent him to Eva's.

GILLESPIE

Well...

CROCKETT

Getting warm.

He moves off.

A panel truck with the legend "NED TEBBETS, PLUMBING CONTRACTOR" passes. Crockett flags it down. The driver, a pleasant looking man in his late twenties, leans out. His name is, not surprisingly, NED TEBBETS.

CROCKETT

Can you fix that leak today?

NED

Five. Five-thirty. That do?

CROCKETT

Have to.

Tebbets drives off and Crockett goes on to Straker & Barlow. He opens the door and goes in.

44 INT. BARLOW & STRAKER - DAY

40

As the BELL TINKLES cheerily, Straker turns to Crockett.

STRAKER

Good afternoon, Mr. Crockett.

CROCKETT

You've sure fixed it up,

STRAKER

You think so? You like it?

CROCKETI

Fine job. Sure a lot different from the laundromat I sold you.

STRAKER

I'd have to agree.

CROCKETT

Very tasteful.

BEN

I'll bet you wouldn't have finished it.

SHISAN

Wow, are you defensive!

BEN

Wow.

SUSAN

(angrily)

Wow!

They stare at each other. Finally Ben nods.

BEN

What's your name?

SUSAN

Susan. I teach art at Holly Elementary. My last name is Norton. My father's a doctor. I took your book out of the library because I'd read your other one...

BEN

Title?

.SUSAN

I don't remember. Are you neurotic?

BEN

Medium. How about you?

SUSAN

(smiling)

Medium. Enough to want to leave Salem's Lot, go to Boston or New York again, make a mark in the world.

(beat)

Are you coming to dinner?

He puts down the book. Looks at her again. Hey, she is kind of beautiful. So is he, kind of. And this has all played out like one of the scenes from one of his smartass books.

BEN

Got a boyfriend?

(CONTINUED)

76

77 CONTINUED:

TIL THOUD.

Men.

SUSAN (with a wink

ANN

at Ben)

Men!

She gets the look.

ANN

Do you want coffee, Mr. Mears?

BEN

Yes, please.

SUSAN

How do you like it, Ben?

The Ben is a subtle dig at Ann.

BEN

Black.

SUSAN

Dad?

NORTON

You know what I think of caffeine.

SUSAN

But you still drink coffee.

NORTON

Mornings only. And I don't

recommend it.

(as the women

leave)

She married a man named Weasel Phillips. Came up to here on her, thin as a heron's leg, smelled like a skunk, never made a decent living, and no one could figure out why. Got divorced, but he still lives there. How it goes in a small town.

CUT TO:

77 INT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

as Susan and Ann go about their little duties,

and the formation of the state of the state

ANN

What is his book about?

SUSAN

His latest is about two men.

ANN

Not one of those?

SUSAN

It's very beautifully written.

ANN

Goes into a lot of detail, I suppose.

SUSAN

Well, that's what sells books, Mother. People want a lot of explicit...

ANN

(sharply)

I don't.

SUSAN

I mean most people.

ANN

I'm not 'most people.' How does he know about those things?

SUSAN

I don't know, Mother. He just knows. But you've got to admit, Mother, he does seem manly.

ANN

That's a matter of opinion. I thought you were seeing Ned Tebbets.

SUSAN

I've seen Ned?

ANN

He seems serious about you.

SUSAN

Mother, even if I stay in the Lot for the rest of my life, I'm not going to marry Ned Tebbets.

(CONTINUED)

83

77

You could do worse. He's bought some land with Larry Crockett, is going to build...

SUSAN

Mother!

ANN

Women have to be practical, Susan.

Ann, back straight, attitude rigid, is starting for the kitchen. Susan stops her with:

SUSAN

Mother, Ben's book ...

I won't read it.

SUSAN

(laughing) I was teasing you. It's about a man and a woman.

That can be just as bad.

Okay, Susan, you can't win.

CUT TO:

78

78 EXT. NORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

> Ned Tebbets cruises by in his truck. He sees the lights in the house. He notes Ben's car.

> > CUT TO:

79 INT. BEN'S ROOM - ON THE DOOR - NIGHT

> which is opening slowly. (A little -- only a little -- suspense, please.) A form in the shadows. Moving forward. Now being partially revealed by light from the street. Now fully revealed as Weasel snaps on a light.

> > (CONTINUED)

82 INT. NORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

> Ann turns from the window, as we HEAR the SOUND of Ben's MOTOR GRIND and the CAR DRIVE OFF.

What is he doing in Salem's Lot?

Writing a book, he said.

ANN

Did he say about what?

NORTON

Well, I didn't ask him that, and he didn't say.

There's a lot of sex in his books.

NORTON

I guess there is... (looking at her) ... in books, anyway.

She looks back at him, uncompromisingly.

CUT TO:

83 INT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

> Susan is sitting rather close to Ben. Obvious that she is taken with him; obvious that he is taken with her.

> > What about Ned Tibbet?

SUSAN

Tebbets.

BEN

Tebbets.

SUSAN In high school he was BMOC, Three letter man -- football, basketball, hockey.

And you were a cheerleader?

SUSAN

Right.

Twirled a baton?

83

85 CONTINUED:

BEN

Two years.

SUSAN
Is that what you're writing about?

BEN

No. I'm writing about a house. The Marsten House.

Susan stares at him for some moments.

SUSAN

The Marsten House? Why?

BEN

Because something about it has followed me all my life. And I don't know why. And I want to find out.

SUSAN

I see. No, I don't see, but that's okay.

A sign is flashing up ahead, at the side of the road, announcing "The Del."

BEN

(coming off the subject)

Let's go in there.

Susan starts to say something -- a protest -- but Ben is already turning into the parking lot.

84 EXT. PARKING LOT - THE DELL - THRU WINDSHIELD - NIGHT 84

Ben's headlights flashpaint the other cars and then Ned Tebbets' panel truck.

85 INT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

8.

Susan tightens, and Ben notices. He eases into a slot. Turns to her.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Better not?

Susan says nothing.

Ben puts the car into reverse.

SUSAN

No. I have a right. But...

BEN

He might bust me up?

SUSAN

Tell me you're a black belt.

BEN

Hey, if you have any fantasy about two grown men beating each other's brains out over you...

SUSAN

I don't.

BEN

It's not going to happen. Because I don't like to fight. I'm not a coward but...

SUSAN

You don't have to explain.

BEN

I'm not hooked into the macho game. Is there anywhere else?

SUSAN

Well, there's the Dell... and there's the movies in Bangor... and there's the Lake.

REN

What do you want to do?

They look at each other for some moments, before:

SUSAN

Let's go to the Lake.

Ben backs out, spins the car, takes off. As CAMERA PANS TO Ned Tebbets' panel truck.

CUT TO:

86

BEN

Medium.

SUSAN

I hope it's a long book. Will it be a long book?

BEN

Not sure.

SUSAN

Why the Marsten House?

BEN

I've always had this feeling about it. Evil. My aunt worked there, came in every day to keep house for Hubie Marsten. You know about him?

SUSAN

I've heard he was suspected of something... children disappearing and such. And he died there... suicide?

Some people say he fell down the cellar stairs. Others claim he hanged himself. I came back here to find out about it.

SUSAN

Why?

BEN

I don't know. Something. You ever feel ... something.

I feel something now.

Ben looks at her. This woman is very direct, and for a moment his guard is up. And then he lets it happen. They embrace. Really, it begins to happen. Because a CAR CRUNCHES around the curve in the dirt road, its headlights catching them. They look back at the headlights, startled.

The headlights go out, leaving us in darkness.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - DAY 87

87

Ben is at his worktable, hammering away (as all writers fantasize). A cup of coffee gone cold. Possibly he has a cigarette, possibly not. The Marsten House is VISIBLE THROUGH the open WINDOW. Once or twice Ben glances up at it.

EXT. MARSTEN HOUSE - DAY 88

88

Straker exits. He gets into the black Cadillac. We FOLLOW him down the driveway. There is a slight tension in his bearing; he is not quite as composed as usual.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

89

A BELL RINGS. Kids debouch into corridor. Moving against the tide is Ned Tebbets. He enters a classroom.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 90

90

Susan looks up from some papers she has been gathering. Tidying up. What a surprise! What an unpleasant surprise! Because Ned doesn't come to visit her, and this must be about something.

SUSAN

Hello, Ned. What are you doing here? Are you coming back to enroll?

NED

Only to see you, teacher.

SUSAN

That's not a good idea.

NED

What's going on with you, Susan?

What's going on?

Where did you go last night?

98B

90

SUSAN

You have no right to ask that.

NED

I don't have to ask. You were down at the lake. You were seen there.

SUSAN

This is a small town.

The door opens. A couple of kids are drifting in.

SUSAN

(continuing; quickly)
Can we talk about it later?

NED

I'll wait for you after school. I'll wait outside.

90A CLOSE - SUSAN

90

as she watches him go out, his body tense with angry self-righteousness. Trouble. Oh yes, a lot of trouble. But she is ready to deal with it.

CUT TO:

91 INT. CROCKETT'S OFFICE - CROCKETT - DAY

91

On the phone.

CROCKETT

Yes. Yes. Right away.

He hangs up, shucks on his jacket, goes toward the door.

CROCKETT

(continuing)
I'll be right back.

BONNIE

Okay, honey.

CROCKETT

Don't say that. Someday you'll forget.

BONNIE

All right, honey. (giggles)

I forgot.

(CONTINUED)

98B SUSAN AND NED

NED

You were doing something at the Lake.

SUSAN

Oh, please...

NED

I'll get him!

SUSAN

Ned!

But Ned has already jumped into the cab of his truck, and as Susan stares helplessly he races off down the street.

99 WIDE ANGLE

99

Susan and Ben are left looking at each other, a little shaken, across the empty street.

Then Susan crosses the street to Ben and together they start to walk toward her house.

CUT TO:

100 INT. CROCKETT'S OFFICE - DAY

100

But getting darker now. And we SEE Bonnie turning on the lights as the PHONE RINGS. She crosses to answer it as Crockett enters.

BONNTE

Larry Crockett, Real Estate...
Oh hi, honey. Leaving now?...
 (wink at Crockett)
Well, aren't you going to stop
by to give me a hug and a kiss?
 (rolls her eyes)
What time will you get back home?
Well, if I'm sleeping, don't wake
me. I know how you are sometimes,
you big bad bear.

A kiss-kiss into the phone (oh, it's ludicrous) before she hangs up and turns to Crockett.

BONNIE

(continuing)

Big bad bear!

Obvious: she has been feeding on Lana Turner late late movies. Dangerous.

CUT TO:

Ann is finishing preparations for dinner. Norton leans against a counter.

He's the kind of man who unsettles her. A writer.

NORTON

Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Longfell...

Please be serious.

NORTON

I am. Writing is an honorable profession, even in New England.

I don't know why she's attracted to these artistic types.

NORTON

Because she's one herself.

ANN

What about the one in New York? The painter? Do you want her to go through that again?

It was part of her growing up.

That's the way you look at it?

NORTON

Not entirely. But women do have painful love affairs.

She's your daughter.

NORTON

She's a woman.

You could try to protect her ...

NORTON

Stop drawing up a whole of particulars against this man. All right, he doesn't have a nine to five job, and he does pound at a typewriter for a living -- something that's mysterious to most of us --

ANN

There's no security...

NORTON

Honey, she doesn't have to marry a doctor. Or a plumber. She doesn't have to marry. She's free -- and let's accept that.

(moment)

All right?

(moment)

All right?

ANN

(finally)

Ask him to stay for dinner.

NORTON

Thank you.

He starts out.

102 EXT. NORTON PORCH - EVENING 102

A warm night. INSECT SOUNDS of approaching summer. Ben and Susan are sitting -- only that. Circumspect. And Ben is saying with a slight deprecating laugh:

BEN

Straker.

SUSAN

Who?

BEN

Of Barlow & Straker, antique dealers. Why is he here?

SUSAN

To sell antiques, I suppose.

Why buy the Marsten House?

SUSAN

Why did you want to live there?

BEN

Why does he?

The door is being opened by Bill Norton as Ben speaks. Norton thrusts his head through the opening.

NORTON

Ben, would you like to stay for dinner?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

(jumping up)

I'm sorry. I can't. I have to meet someone.

(to Susan's look)

Jason Burke. He started a fire

burning a long time ago. (to Norton)

Thank Mrs. Norton for me, would

you? Good night. (to Susan)

Call you later?

SUSAN

Do it.

For a moment they don't know what to do. Then, awkwardly, they kind of shake hands. And Ben bounds away. Norton is smiling.

NORTON

Why didn't you kiss him good night?

SUSAN

(exasperated)

Ohl

CUT TO:

103 INT. CROCKETT'S OFFICE - EVENING

103

Cullie is kissing Bonnie. Crockett, at his desk in the b.g., is elaborately uninterested. It's not a lavish kiss and they break quickly.

BONNIE

What time do you think you'll get back, honey?

CULLIE

Oh, with all the junking around, locking up those things... Take us five, six hours. Back midnight or after.

(to Crockett)

You stay away from her, you hear?

CROCKETT

(nervous laughter)

I'11 try.

(CONTINUED)

JASON (CONT'D)
Lot of emphasis on the Marsten
House. Yes, yes, I do remember.
You were always interested in that
house.

BEN

My aunt would go up there once a week, clean up for Hubie Marsten.

JASON

So you used to go up there?

BEN

I was never allowed to go along with her.

JASON

Mark Petrie wrote most of the pageant this year. Just as you did. Both talented.

BEN

Another writer?

JASON
Very possibly. I'd certainly be proud if I helped develop two authors. Make a lifetime of teaching worthwhile. Not that it hasn't been.

BEN

You got me started...

JASON

You had the gift.

BEN

You encouraged me.

JASON

I had the opportunity to continue, but you left then. You were...

BEN

Eleven.

JASON

Tell me why the Marsten House. I remember it figured in your pageant, and now...

BEN

Maybe because my aunt worked there.

Well ...

BEN

JASON

Do you believe that a house itself -the Marsten House, for instance -can be evil in its stone foundations. its wooden beams, the glass of its windows, even the plaster of its ceilings... evil. The man who built the house ...

JASON Joshua Vaughn, yes?

BEN

Killed his wife, a servant...

JASON

A woman.

BEN

And hung himself in a bedroom closet. Hubie Marsten's wife and sister died mysteriously -- rumors of poison. never proved -- and then he came here and young boys in the area disappeared -- some suspected Marsten, but never proved...

(long moment) ... Never proved.

There is a long look between Ben and Jason. Never proved. Then:

BEN

(continuing)

And now we have a Mr. Straker...

JASON

And a Mr. Barlow.

BEN

Whom no one has ever seen.

JASON

And you think ...?

I think an evil house attracts evil

Jason leans back in his chair, staring at Ben.

(continuing)

I came back here to live in that house. To experience it.

199 CONTINUED:

EVA

There it is. Help yourself.

As Ben does so:

EVA

(continuing)

You know I was married to Weasel?

I heard that.

EVA

I was once a big loud broad who turned men's heads ... Can you believe that?

BEN

I believe it.

EVA

I turned heads. Now look.

Ben touches her gently.

BEN

You're beautiful. And I remember you.

EVA

You do?

BEN

I remember when you'd visit with my aunt. You kissed me once. And held me.

You remember that?

BEN

I remember how I felt. In fact, that's part of what I'm writing

(small hug)

And if Weasel reads that, he'll go crazy with jealousy.

VOICE (O.S.)

Ben Mears. Telephone!

BEN

(up) Coming!

(CONTINUED)

(CONTINUED)

199

126

213

We visit with Mark's father and mother in their livingroom.

JUNE

Do you think it's affected him, Ted?

TED

Hard to tell.

(lights his

pipe)

He's got a hell of a poker face.

TUNF.

Still waters run deep, though.

TED

(drawing)

Never do know just what he is thinking.

JUNE

You have talks with him.

TED

Yeah, but still you never know. He never shows much of anything. Or tells.

JUNE

I wonder why.

TEL

Nothing to worry about. Some people are like that. Don't forget, this is Calvin Coolidge country, just about.

JUNE

Well, Mark isn't Calvin Coolidge.

TEL

No, and he isn't going to become President either.

JUNE

We don't know about that.

TEL

I'm willing to give up that part of the American dream.

216 CONTINUED;

JASON

How's the new book going?

BEN

Hard.

JASON

Tough way to make a living?

BE

It's the only way I know. Not making much of a living, but it's the only way I know.

Beer arrives, and a pause. Then:

JASON

The Marston House still the center of the story?

BEN

As far as I've gone.

TASON

What about the Glick boys? Do you connect them to the house?

BEN

Everything in Salem's Lot connects with that house. You can see it from every part of town. It's like a beacon throwing off energy forces.

JASON

Have you ever been inside?

BEN

No. But I've dreamed about it.

JASON

And . . .?

BEN

Nightmares.

JASON

Such as?

BEN

Blood. Being chased.

JASON

By whom? What?

BEI

Great formless things. Shapeless things. Nightmare things.

(CONTINUED)

235 CONTINUED:

JASON All your subconscious fears...

BEN

Tuned in to that house.

JASON

Did your aunt ever tell you anything that would... well, make you afraid?

BEN

Of the house. No, she said it was furnished in a perfectly ordinary way. Hubie Marsten liked everything neat, clean, orderly. And that's the way she kept it, except for the cellar.

JASON

Except for the cellar?

BEN

He never let her go into the cellar.

JASON

And she never sneaked down there?

BEN

She was too afraid of Hubie.

A hand suddenly grabs the table. A second. Mike Ryerson supporting himself. His eyes are glazed. Ben leaps up to help him, while Jason half rises.

JASON

Mike!

MIKE

(slurring)

'Lo, Mr. Burke.

Jason studies him.

JASON

You on something, Mike?

MIKE

No.

JASON

Dope?

MIKE

No. No.

BEN

Sit down.

Come fast.

He hangs up. As does Ben.

BEN

Hell no, I'm -- was -- a Baptist.

Do you have a crucifix or a rosary...?

JASON (V.O.)

F.VA

In my bedroom. Did Mr. Burke ask for it?

BEN

Yes.

(urgently)

Please!

EVA

(puzzled)
He's not Catholic. I don't believe
he goes to church.

BEN

Please!

CUT TO:

236 EXT. JASON BURKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Ben drives up, he sees that every light on the lower floor is lit up. Ben goes up the walk hastily, but his body indicates tension. The door is opened as he reaches it. Jason is in the doorway, pale, trembling.

JASON

Come in, Ben. Come in.

237 INT. JASON BURKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

, 237

236

It is a modest house, full of books and records, the house of a solitary. Jason leads the way into the hallway.

238 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

238

Immediately Jason faces Ben. Ben takes the crucifix from his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

133.

BEN

It's Eva's.

Ben's eyes fall on two peculiar items on the hallway table: an old fashioned clasp Bible and a .38 revolver.

BEN

(continuing)

What's the matter?

JASON

Thank God you're here.

He picks up the revolver.

BEN

Hey, don't play with that thing. Is it loaded?

JASON

Yes, it's loaded. Although I don't think it would do any good.

He sets the revolver down.

BEN

You look awful. What's up?

JASON

There's a dead man upstairs.

BEN

Mike Ryerson?

JASON

Yes. Dead.

BEN

Are you sure?

JASON

I am in my guts, Although I haven't looked in on him. I haven't dared. Because, in another way, he might not be dead at all.

BEN

Jason, you're not talking sense.

JASON

Don't you think I know that. I'm talking nonsense and I'm thinking madness.

(MORE)

238

JASON (CONT'D)
But, remember, Danny Glick died of
pernicious anemia and Mike fell
asleep after burying him and didn't
wake up until morning. And you
saw Mike.

BEN

(weakly)
This is today. New England. Small town. This isn't...

Ben stops, looking at Jason. He fingers the crucifix.

BEN

(continuing)

All right. Madness. Let's go upstairs and have a look. Take this.

Jason takes the crucifix as they start up the stairs.

239 INT. JASON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

239

FOLLOWING Ben and Jason through the house, up the stairs, and into the guest room. (This should be played in full, and for full effect.)

240 INT. GUEST ROOM - OVER MIKE - NIGHT

240

First light is falling on Mike Ryerson, who seems to be sleeping peacefully, as Ben and Jason enter in the b.g. They come to the bedside and look down at Mike.

BEN

He's all right. Sleeping.

JASON

The window's open. It was closed and locked. I made sure of it.

Ben steps to the window, looks out. Dawn is breaking.

BEN

First light.

JASON

Look!

He is pinching the upper hem of the flawlessly laundered sheet drawn up on Mike's chest. Ben looks down. There is a single small drop of blood on the sheet, dried to maroon.

(CONTINUED)

272 CONTINUED: (2)

272

156.

SUSAN

(from the shadows)

... vampires.

CALLAHAN

Vampires?

BEN

In Salem's Lot.

SUSAN

Father, have you noticed anything out of the way, peculiar...?

CALLAHAN

To do with vampires?

BEN

With anything.

Callahan studies them.

CALLAHAN

Well, the Malloys weren't at Mass this morning, and Mrs. Malloy never misses. And Mrs. Glick -- but she'd suffered a terrible blow.

BEN

Ned Tebbets. Mike Ryerson.

CALLAHAN

And the McConnell baby. You think this Straker is a vampire. Seriously?

REN

Not a vampire. A vampire's helper. Barlow -- whoever he is -- Barlow is the vampire.

CALLAHAN

And Barlow is here?

BEN

Barlow is here. Possibly in the Marsten House, although that seems obvious. Possibly hiding somewhere else. But Barlow is here.

Another pause.

CALLAHAN

What do you want me to do?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

First, prepare holy water. Then go to the hospital, sprinkle it over Jason Burke's bed. And pray for him.

CALLAHAN

And then?

BEN

Help us in every way you can -through prayer, spiritual power...

The TELEPHONE RINGS. Callahan takes the call.

CALLAHAN

St. Jude's... Yes, this is he... Yes, I will. I'll come over.

He hangs up.

CALLAHAN

(continuing)

That was one of my parishioners. It seems his son Mark is telling a wildly imaginative story.

CUT TO:

273 EXT. NORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

273

Susan stands beside her car, looking at Ben and her father, who are silhouetted on the porch. They are talking, quite earnestly. From this distance we cannot hear what they are saying.

But we do SEE Bill Norton go into the house, and we SEE Ben come down the path to Susan.

BEN

He's going to do it.

(We may be able to see Bill Norton make a telephone call $\overline{)}$

SUSAN

At least you'll know then.

REN

We'll have some medical evidence.
(MORE)

BEN

Marjorie Glick rose and joined the Undead.

SUSAN

The Undead?

BEN

She's become a vampire too. Soon the whole town of Salem's Lot... You'll have to go.

SUSAN

Mother and Dad?

BEN

Your father's going to help me destroy this creature. But you take your mother, tomorrow, during daylight...

SUSAN

What about the others?

BEN

Would they believe us? Before we could make everyone believe, they'd all be among them.

SUSAN

Can't you get help? The county or the state police...

BEN

Or the FBI Vampire Squad? No one would believe this is happening.

SUSAN

But you say it is happening.

BEN

It is happening.

He puts his arms around her.

BEN

(continuing)

You'll have to be out of town before sunset tomorrow. Take your mother with you. Anyone else you can persuade. And when this is over...

He kisses her. And they lock in an embrace more desperate and despairing than passionate.

313 CONTINUED:

The stairs have been sawn away. And Mark hurtles into space, landing with a SICKENING THUD.

Ben looks down.

Knives have been planted, blade upwards, in a thick piece of plywood at the base of what would have been the cellar steps. Mark has missed them by inches. He is stirring.

Ben swings out from the remaining step, and throws himself beyond the knives.

He kneels beside Mark, who is getting up.

BEN

Easy ...

MARK

I'm all right.
(winces)

Ankle.

BEN

Can you stand up?

Mark manages to stand up.

Ben pokes around for the light switch. Turns it on. The light reveals... nothing. The crate is in splinters. But there is no trace of Barlow. Or anyone.

MARK

We have to hurry.

BEN

I know, I know. I feel him here. Where is he?

MARK

What's that?

He points to heavy dresser, pushed against the wall.

BEN

It's not big enough. And it's flush against the wall.

Mark is at the dresser, straining.

MARK

What's behind it?

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

BEN

Hey, you can't do that. Let's tip it over.

They both bend, exert, tilt the dresser slowly, until it topples.

MARK

I knew it!

A small door, chest high, secured by a padlock.

MARK

(continuing)

The root cellar.

Ben finds a rusty hammer which lies on a heap of rubble, and swings it again and again, trying to break the lock. It doesn't give.

BEN

Damn!

Now he takes an axe, strips it of its rubber cover. He takes one of the vials of holy water out of his pocket. It falls, breaks; as it spreads on the floor, it smokes.

They stare at the phenomenon.

MARK

Do it! Do it!

Ben smashes at the door. Again. He splinters the door.

BEN

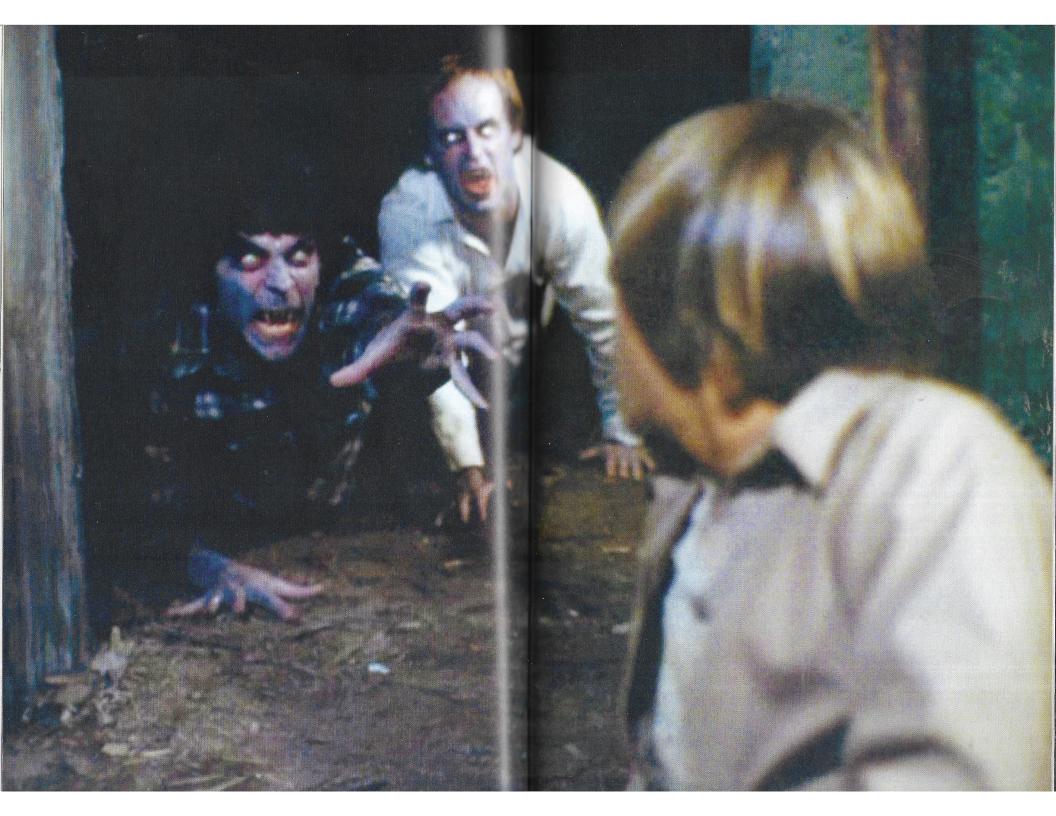
Now!

They begin to crawl into the root cellar.

314 INT. ROOT CELLAR - DAY/NIGHT

314

The root cellar is small and cell-like, empty except for a few dusty bottles, some crates, a bushel basket of potatoes sprouting eyes in every direction -- and the bodies. Barlow's coffin stands at the far end. Propped up against the wall like a mummy's sarcophagus. In front of the coffin are the bodies of Ralph and Danmy, Weasel Phillips, Ned Tebbets, Mike Ryerson, and Marjorie, lying stiff as though rigor mortis has set in, But not Susan.



Salem's Lot

Directed By Tobe Hooper Teleplay By Paul Monash Based On The Novel By Stephen King Produced By Richard Kobritz Anna Cottle Associate Producer Stirling Silliphant **Executive Producer** Music Composed and Conducted By Harry Sukman Director Of Photography Jules Brenner Tom Pryor Film Editor Carrol Sax **Production Designer** Mort Rabinowitz Make-Up Artist Ben Lane Unit Production Manager Norman Cook First Assistant Director Lloyd Allen Second Assistant Director John N. Whittle Jerry Adams Set Decoration Property Mark Miner **Special Effects** Frank Torro Wardrobe Phyllis Garr Barry Kellogg Special Make-Up Jack Young S.M.A. **Special Lenses** Morton K. Greenspoon Hair Bette Iverson Title Design Gene Kraft **Production Sound** Richard Raguse Music Editor Jay Smith Sound Editing Sound FX. Inc., Ron Clark Casting Vivian McRae

Uncredited

Boom Operator Brian L. McCarty
Key Grip Bud Heller

Costumer Barry Kellogg
Camera Operator Ron Vargas
Crab Dolly Operator Production Grip Electrician
On-Site Construction
(Marsten House) Barry Kellogg
Ron Vargas
Barry Kellogg
Ron Vargas
Paul Jacobsen
Paul Jacobsen

Production Company
Location Facilities
Provided By
Filmed On Location At
Original Broadcast
Repeat
Running Time
Warner Bros Inc.,/CBS
The Burbank Studios
Ferndale, California
November 17 & 24 1979 (USA)
September 22 1981 (USA)
182 Mins (TV Miniseries)
112 Mins (Theatrical Version,

Cast

Europe)

David Soul Ben Mears Richard K. Straker James Mason Lance Kerwin Mark Petrie Bonnie Bedelia Susan Norton Lew Ayres Jason Burke Julie Cobb Bonnie Sawyer Gordon 'Weasel' Phillips Elisha Cook George Dzundza Cully Sawyer Dr. Bill Norton **Ed Flanders** Clarissa Kaye Marjorie Glick Geoffrey Lewis Mike Ryerson **Ned Tebbets** Barney McFadden Constable Parkins Gillespie Kenneth McMillan Larry Crockett Fred Willard

Marie Windsor Eva Miller
Barbara Babcock
Bonnie Bartlett Ann Norton
Joshua Bryant Ted Petrie

James Gallery Father Donald Callahan Robert Lussier Deputy Constable

Nolly Gardner

Brad Savage Danny Glick Ronnie Scribner Ralphie Glick Ned Wilson Henry Glick

Uncredited

Reggie Nalder Kurt Barlow Ernest Phillips Royal Snow

Title Changes

Salem's Lot: The Miniseries USA

Salem's Lot: The Movie USA (Cable TV)

Blood Thirst USA (Video)

Las Brujas De Salem Argentina Kauhujen Kaupunki Finland

Les Vampires De Salem France

Brennen Muß Salem Germany

Schrecken Im Marsten Haus Germany

Le Notti Di Salem Italy

Miasteczko Salem Poland

Phantasma II Spain

La Hora Del Vampiro Mexico

Acknowledgments

"We have to go further."

"Not yet. Not yet..."

This project began with the kindness and generosity of David Soul.

In early 2002 he was touring British theatres in a revival of Ira Levin's *Deathtrap*. When he arrived in Yorkshire I wrote him a letter requesting an interview. The subject matter was not Levin's play but a TV movie he had appeared in almost a quarter of a century before. *Deathtrap* had reached almost the end of its run before Soul made contact. He agreed to the interview. And when we met it became clear that he was passionate about recalling the adventure that had been *Salem's Lot*.

The next stage came courtesy of Dave Worrall and Lee Pfeiffer at *Cinema Retro* magazine. They commissioned an overview of Tobe Hooper's seminal film that eventually ran to eight pages. Alongside Soul's interview were contributions from producer Richard Kobritz, supporting actor Geoffrey Lewis and Susan Sukman McCray, daughter of Harry Sukman who composed the show's score.

I am deeply grateful to Dave and Lee for the initial commission and for their permission, freely given, to reprint it in this book. I am also grateful to Messrs Soul, Kobritz and Lewis, to Susan Sukman McCray and to Joshua Bryant who, happily relocated to France, sat down to view *Salem's Lot* with his wife in 2013, having never actually watched it previously in the intervening 34 years. I was happy to provide him with a late premiere.

Lastly there was Tobe Hooper. I had met with Hooper in the summer of 2010 to discuss partnering on a book about his films. That book never happened; this one did. And during that early morning, three-hour conversation ("This is the most time I've ever spent talking about *Salem's Lot*," said the gravelly growl

on the telephone line) his abiding love for Stephen King's story shone through like the ethereal light in Ben Mears' holy water.

Others who offered assistance and encouragement: Ian S Bolton; Henry Fenwick; Paul Jacobsen in Ferndale, for providing local information; Aine Leicht, for setting up the interview with Geoffrey Lewis; and Sharalee Flesche, Social Chair, Residents of Beverly Glen, for attempting to make contact with Barbara Babcock.

To those who went before I owe a special debt of gratitude. Bill Kelley's work for *Cinefantastique* laid the groundwork for anyone's knowledge of *Salem's Lot* in the 1980s. David Del Valle is a walking repository of information on fantasy cinema stretching back to the 1920s. He's interviewed them all and his conversation with Reggie Nalder, aka Mr Barlow, is reproduced in this book. Other contributions—great and small—come courtesy of Randy Waage, Miles Beller, Paul Gagne, Joe O'Brien, and writer/publisher Jerad Walters.

The majority of production stills and behind-the-scenes shots in this book appear courtesy of the Tony Earnshaw Collection. Richard Kobritz gave candid images from his own archive and Susan Sukman McCray provided pictures of her father from her personal collection. David Del Valle loaned images of Reggie Nalder. Jerad Walters came up with the rest. I thank them each and every one.

Everybody should be able to lay claim to a defining moment of teen terror. *Salem's Lot* was mine. Like Ben Mears and Mark Petrie I hail from a small town. The difference is that the one I live in is mostly free of vampires. Mostly...

Picture credits

Richard Kobritz: images on pages 14, 17, 123, 129, 190, 195, 198 David Del Valle: images on pages 140, 153



Photo: Mark Davis

TONY EARNSHAW has been active as a writer specialising in film for almost 30 years. He has contributed interviews, features and reviews to magazines in the US, the UK and around the world including Fangoria, Little Shoppe of Horrors, Sight & Sound, Cinema Retro, Hammer Horror, Impact, Scarlet Street, Diabolique, Starburst and Film Review. His first book, An Actor and a Rare One-Peter Cushing as Sherlock Holmes, was published in 2001 by Scarecrow Press and received the Special Sherlock Award from Sherlock magazine in 2002. His second book, Beating the Devil—The Making of Night of the Demon (Tomahawk Press, 2005) received tremendously positive reviews and was nominated as Best Book in the Rondo Hatton Classic Horror Awards. His most recent book was Made in Yorkshire (Guerilla Books, 2008), an encyclopaedic look at 120 years of filmmaking in the birthplace of motion pictures. In addition to his books and magazine work he has compiled and edited monographs on Jack Cardiff, Om Puri, Shahrukh Khan, Eric Portman and Lawrence Gordon Clark. He was formerly head of film programming at the UK's National Museum of Photography, Film & Television (now National Media Museum) and for twelve years was artistic director of Bradford International Film Festival. In 2002 he founded the Fantastic Films Weekend, leading it through ten editions, and as a programmer he has curated seasons for the National Film Theatre in London. He is a columnist and film critic for the Yorkshire Post and guests on the Movie Monday show for BBC Radio. He is married with two daughters and lives in Yorkshire, England.

